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ANOTHER DAY.

BY LOUISE CLARISSE.

How stalling is this face of morn,
How bright the sunbeam's ray!
How glad the hearts that greet the dawn
Of happy Christmas day!

How joyful are the hearts that meet
Within God's house to pray,
And sing at their Redeemer's feet,
On happy Christmas day!

The young and old in one glad voice
Their grateful tribute pay;
And sacred words bid them rejoice
On happy Christmas day!

The schoolboy's shout and merry game,
The robin's simple lay,
E'en Nature doth herself proclaim
A happy Christmas day!

Then let us offer to our King
Glad praises while we may!
Perchance we shall not live to sing
Another Christmas day!

A GOLDEN PRIZE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PENKIVEL," "OLIVE VARCOE," "MY CROOKED FATHE," "SHEATHED IN VELVET," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XX.

IT WAS the morning after the the ball, and Lord Carr-Lyon, in a gaudy and elaborate dressing-gown, reclined in the depths of a luxurious chair.

He looked pale and used up, very much indeed like a sick monkey, and smoked his cigar in the half-hearted fashion which a man displays who has spent the preceding "not wisely but too well."

He looked unhappy as well as seedy, and every now and then he turned over in his chair, and swore under his breath.

The ball had been a great and a tremendous success, and not until the sun had threatened to invade the brilliant rooms, had the last guests taken their departure; a great success which would remain a vivid memory in Sandford for years to come, and yet the lord and giver of the feast looked back upon it with a moody brow and a feeling of bitter disappointment: for Kate, the belle of the ball, the loveliest woman he had seen, notwithstanding she was pledged to him, seemed farther than ever from him.

Not one word, or smile of tenderness had she bestowed upon him. He might have been one of her merest acquaintances, an ordinary friend, judging by her manner, rather than his plighted wife; and her coldness, her frigid, studious courtesy had chilled and at the same time maddened him.

He got up from his chair at last, after brooding for half-an-hour, and flinging the dead cigar from him with a spiteful gesture, went out on to the terrace.

"Confound her!" he muttered; "if I did not care for her so much, if I wasn't so badly hit, I'd throw her off, I would, if it was only to rile the major. How beautiful she looked last night. There wasn't another woman in the room to hold a candle to her. And she looks so proud and haughty too: like a countess born and bred. And yet she can smile and be soft when she likes," and he sighed. "But never to me, never once since we've been engaged. I wonder——"

He stopped short and his pale face flushed painful as he put the torturing question:

"I wonder whether there has been any other man!"

He could not go on, for the mere idea, the bare thought was maddening.

"No!" he said, reassuring himself. "There's no one else: who should there be? I should have seen it if there had been! There is no one else. It's her nature to be cold and—and stand-offish, even with her future husband."

But he sighed, even as he laid the flattering unction to his soul.

It was a lovely morning, but the beauty of earth and sky brought no peace, either to his racking head or his unsatisfied heart, and he went and leant against the stone railings, almost in the same spot where Kate had leant, and looked over towards Sandford.

Suddenly something white flew past his face and fell at his feet.

He was in so shaky and nervous a condition that he started back, and uttered an oath, staring at the object with fearful gaze for a moment, then he saw it was an envelope, and stooping he picked it up gingerly between his finger and thumb.

It was addressed in an illiterate and scrambling scrawl to "Lord Carlton," and his lordship eyed it suspiciously, as if it were some venomous reptile.

"Now, where the deuce did this come from?" he muttered, with angry suspicion, and he ran to the terrace and peered over into the shrubbery, into which anyone who had thrown the letter had plenty of time to disappear.

He thought for a moment he would call the servants and send them out to search the grounds, but he stopped himself halfway to the window, and slowly and suspiciously opened the envelope.

It contained half a sheet of soiled note paper upon which was written, in the same untaught hand, these words:

"Ask your yung lady, Miss Kate, whether she knows Mister Clifford Raven? You 'ud better keep a good look out on her. Tell her she ain't the only one he's foolin' with, but there's one as has his eye on him, and Nellie Wood, too."

For some two or three minutes Lord Carr-Lyon stared at the ill-written, and almost illegible words, dazed and bewildered; but suspicion and jealousy will sharpen the dullest brain, and suddenly the meaning of the note flashed upon him.

Someone was warning him that Kate was flirting with another man, a certain Clifford Raven.

"Clifford Raven!"

He repeated the name between his closed teeth until it became meaningless. Who was he? Where was he? and this Nellie Wood, too; who was she? What did it mean?

He went back to the room, and dropping into the chair, spread the half sheet of note paper on his knee, and pondered over it until each word seemed to burn itself into his brain.

He tried to remember whether he had ever heard the name; he was certain that Kate had never mentioned it. "For a sufficient reason, no doubt," he thought furiously. What had passed between her and this unknown man? After all then, there was someone else, and her coldness to him, her betrothed husband, was easy to understand.

"Curse her! Curse him, whoever he is!" he snarled, crushing the paper in his hand. "So that's it, is it, my proud beauty? That's the reason you don't like me to touch you, and treat me as if I were the dirt under your feet! All for this man, this Clifford Raven! If I had him here!" and he glared into vacancy with a vicious fury. "And it's known, too! Who threw this thing? One of the servants? No, not a servant: they wouldn't dare! It's someone outside!"

He sprang to the bell and rang it violently.

"Send—go—go and search the shrubbery—over there!" he gasped, pointing to the window. "There, you fool!" he shouted, as the bewildered footman stared backwards and forwards. "Two or three of you go, and let the dogs loose! There's some fellow lurking about! You idiot, don't you understand?"

"Yes, my lord," said the footman, and he was hurrying off, when Lord Carr-Lyon called him back.

"Stop!" he said sullenly. "It's—it's too late, now; he's got clear off by this time. Why didn't you come when I rang, you fool?"

"I came directly, my lord——"

"Get out!" shouted his lordship, and the man left the room.

Lord Carr-Lyon paced up and down, biting his nails and swearing under his breath.

What should he do? At first he thought he would ride over to Kate, confront her with the letter, overwhelm her with abuse—and such abuse!—and then fling her over. Yes, that was what he'd do. He'd punish her and her rascally father, the major, too!—and he made for the door. Then he pulled up and shook his head.

No! There was a better way of revenging himself. He would say nothing, not a word to anyone, until after the marriage.

"Then, my proud and haughty lady, it will be my turn! I'll turn the tables on you, Miss Kate, when I've got you safe and fast!"

He had only just arrived at this decision when the footman opened the door and announced:

"Major Meddon!"

Lord Carr-Lyon crushed the note in his hand and flung himself into the chair as the major came in, sleek and smiling as usual.

"Ah, my dear boy!" he exclaimed, extending his hand. "Thought I'd just run over and see how you were this morning."

"Thanks," said the "dear boy" sullenly, and too fully occupied with a fresh cigar to take the major's fat, soft hand.

"And how are you, eh?" said the major; "a little—er—seedy?—hem! Just pulling yourself together, dear boy? What a splendid affair it was; wasn't it? As I told Kate this morning, upon my word, I never knew anything go off like it, and I've seen a ball or two in my time, my boy!"

"Yes, I suppose so," mumbled his lordship, looking at him sideways, and smiling in a sullen, moody fashion. "You think it was a success, do you?"

"Marvellous!" said the major. "Marvellous! It will be the talk of the county—ah! and of London, too. I don't know whether you care to come out among the fashionables, but if you do—you and Kate—this will be an excellent start!"

"Ah!" said his lordship, "and—how's Kate this morning?"

"Er—a little tired, just a little," said the major, cheerfully. "Rather a trying evening for her, you know. In fact, she wasn't down when I left, but I shall find her all right and as fresh as paint when I go back. You'll have a wife with a magnificent constitution, my dear Carr-Lyon, though I say it! Magnificent!"

"Ye—s," drawled his lordship. "Lot of people here last night; I didn't know a tenth of 'em, and don't know 'em now. Most of 'em friends of yours, I suppose?" he asked with apparent carelessness, but eyeing the major with stealthy keenness.

"Yes, yes," assented the major cheerfully; "I've a large circle of friends. My little girl has been the—er—belle of the place, you see; and—ahem!—well, my dear boy, there was many a young fellow here last night who'd give something to stand in your shoes. Of course Kate has a great many admirers."

"Of course," said his lordship with something like a snarl. "I could see that for myself last night; she'd scarcely time to give me a word. Oh, yes, lots of 'em; I don't even know their names. I did hear one or two, though. There was a Mr. Clifford—Clifford Raven, wasn't there?"

The major was sitting with his hands spread upon his knees, a smile of self-complacency on his sleek face; but as the name smote his ears, the smile died away and the red began to desert his face.

"Mr.—Mr.—what name did you say?" he inquired, trying to speak indifferently, and feeling that his voice sounded hollow and forced.

"Clifford Raven," repeated Lord Carr-Lyon distinctly, his eyes fixed on the major's face, his heart beating with a malicious satisfaction and torturing fury. "What's the matter with you this morning? Are you deaf?"

"N—o, though I think I have got a little cold. Ahem! I didn't quite catch the name. No, I don't know him. Where did you hear of him?"

"I heard—what do you want?" for the major had got up, and was looking at the table.

"Is that brandy and soda there? Don't get up, my dear boy, I'll mix it for myself," and the major mixed the compound with a shaky hand. "I'm a leetle seedy myself, I find, after all. Too much Pomeroy last night, dear boy?"

"Were *you* drunk? I did not notice it," said his lordship, wheeling round so that he might still stare at his victim. "You wanted to know about this man——"

"This man? Oh, Clifford Raven, yes! When did you hear—what made you think——?" stammered the major, breaking down.

The younger man's eyes grew red and sullen, and he could scarcely repress the desire to yell out:

"You old villain, you know there is something between him and Kate; you know you have both been deceiving and hoodwinking me," but he gnawed his moustache and restrained himself.

"Oh, I didn't know," he said carelessly; "I heard his name last night——"

"Last night!" echoed the major, and his hand closed spasmodically round the tumbler.

"Yes; why the devil shouldn't I?" retorted Carr-Lyon? "He was one of the men here, I suppose."

"Clifford Raven here! Impossible!" said the major; then he forced a laugh. "That is—er—he may have been, there was such a crowd of people; didn't know half of them myself."

"You said just now you knew them all," remarked Carr-Lyon, with malicious satisfaction in his confusion.

"No—not all, not all, my dear boy; and I don't know this—er—young fellow at all."

"Who said he was a young man?" Carr-Lyon snarled.

"Well—well, I supposed he was young; but I really don't know. I never heard the name before.

"Oh, you haven't? Are you sure?"

"Let me think. Yes, quite sure. But why did you ask, what makes you take such an interest——"

Carr-Lyon grinned savagely.

"I suppose it's not unnatural for a man to take an interest in his wife's old flames, is it?"

The major drew a breath of relief.

"Is that all you know about him? My dear boy, you're altogether wrong! I'm quite sure Kate doesn't even know him. Why, I should have heard about it, of course?"

There was a moment's pause, during which Carr-Lyon was tortured by the desire to thrust the note under the major's eyes and wring the truth out of him, but

he shut his teeth close and kept quiet.

He was the first to speak.

"Don't mention this to Kate," he said sullenly. "She'll think I'm a jealous fool and—all that."

"Certainly not; just so," assented the major. "But you've no cause to be jealous, my dear boy. If ever a girl was devoted to a man, my dear Kate is devoted to you——"

"Yes, thanks," said Carr-Lyon.

"And I—er—I think I'll get back," and he reached for his hat.

"Wait a minute," said Carr-Lyon. "Sit down. I've got something I want to say to you."

The major sank into the chair with an attempt at his usual self-complacent smile.

"What is it, my dear boy? Anything I can do for you——"

The major stopped, and Carr-Lyon bent forward and fixed his sullen eyes, with their red rims upon him. They seemed to have changed places; it was the younger man who now talked like the superior spirit.

"Look here; there's something you can do for me."

"Anything——" began the major; but the other man stopped him.

"I want Kate to marry me in three weeks——"

"In three weeks!" exclaimed the major.

"Yes," said Carr-Lyon doggedly; "in three weeks. Short notice, isn't it? Never mind. Perhaps I've got my reasons for it; perhaps it's only a whim; at any rate, I mean what I say. I want—to—marry—her—in—three weeks. Now you can get her to do it, and—you'd better!"

There was a covert threat in the tone of the last words, and the major winced.

"My dear boy, Kate is a girl——"

"Yes, I know all that," interrupted Carr-Lyon insolently. "I know what Kate is as well as you do—and better, perhaps," he added significantly. "Come, don't beat about the bush; I'm rather sick of that kind of thing, don't-cha-know. There isn't any difficulty. You get her to promise to marry me, and she can do it as well in three weeks as in three months, or three years."

"But——"

"But, nothing," broke in Carr-Lyon. "Why, what's the matter? I should have thought you'd have been only too glad to handle that money I promised you—and mean to give you as soon as the event comes off."

"Yes, but, my dear boy——"

"Oh, hang it!" exclaimed Carr-Lyon. "Look here—either say you'll do it, and do it, or let the whole thing go. As you say, she has a whole lot of admirers, and perhaps you're not to blame——"

"My dear Carr-Lyon!" protested the major.

"Very well, then; get her to agree. You can tell her—oh, tell her anything you like; but get it arranged. In fact, I'm tired of this game. Get her to marry me as I say, or let the whole thing be off. I don't suppose you care for that money——"

"My dear boy, you are not so rash and—er—precipitate!" said the major soothingly. "If you're set upon this, of course I'll do my best. Kate is—er—devoted to you, and she is—er—good and dutiful girl——"

Carr-Lyon's eyes squinted maliciously.

"You can work it how you like, as you did before, when you got her to promise to marry me. I don't care how you do it," he said with a sneer. "Only do it. In three weeks, you understand; and on the day the ceremony comes off I hand you the money as agreed! Don't say any more; if you talked for a month you wouldn't alter my determination. I'm jealous, if you like, and whimsical, but I want to marry Kate in three weeks, and you can go and arrange it! Just give me the brandy and soda before you start, will you?"

"Certainly," said the major, and he fetched the decanter. "I can understand your impatience, my dear boy, but Kate isn't easy——"

"Kate will do as you ask her," was the cool retort. "You go and settle it! If she won't, why you won't get your money, and I shall shut up this cursed place, and go abroad! There it is in a nutshell. Going? Good morning; give my love to Kate!" and he dismissed the major with an insolent nod.

But no sooner had the door closed than he started to his feet, and began to pace the room furiously.

It was evident that some powerful emotion was trying to master him, for his eyes blazed with a light almost like that of a bright blaze.

"He knew him, this Clifford Raven. He is an old lover of Kate's; I could see it by his face, the old hound!" he hissed between his teeth. "Very well, my fine lady! Oh, wait; only wait until I've got the whip hand of you!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE sun, pouring into Kate's room, had awakened her from a short and fitful sleep which had been haunted by two distinct dreams, lifelike and vivid in their reality.

In one she had been haunted by the presence of Clifford Raven and the sound of his voice, as it had poured out his declaration of love, and in the other the vision of him with the fair girl with violet eyes who leant upon his arm, and whose tears he had wiped away.

And this last vision was the most powerful.

That the man who had laid his heart's eloquence at her feet at one hour, could stoop to wipe the tears from the eyes of another girl the next, was a bitter humiliation for Kate.

Long through the silent hours of the night she had lain awake, recalling every word Clifford Raven had spoken, and, alas! at the same time, seeing him with the fair girl upon his arm, the face upturned to his with loving trust.

She woke—little wonder—bitter and callous. What truth was left in the world when a man like Clifford Raven was proved untrue?

Yes, her father was right, and Clifford Raven was not worthy of a single thought of hers!

She got up and dressed herself, declining Ann' proffered aid, and went down to the breakfast room, but not to eat breakfast.

Her appetite had deserted her—had gone, indeed, with her faith in men.

Last night, when she had leant over the balcony, and listened to Clifford Raven she could have sworn by his truth and honesty; but now!— well, had she not seen him wiping tears from the eyes of some laborer's daughter?

Yes, he was utterly false, and she had been cruelly deceived, for she had actually pitied him as she had listened to his seemingly passionate avowal, and had felt the tears very near her eyes when she had murmured "Too late!"

Of the ball she thought little; it had been a success, no doubt, but it was all like a dream to her, from which the only thing that stood out clearly was her meeting with Clifford Raven, and her detection of his falseness.

Never again would she put the slightest faith, in word, or look, or face of man; never again!

They were all alike, and perhaps, she thought bitterly, her future husband, Lord Carr-Lyon, was as good as any of them.

It was a dangerous state of mind for poor Kitty to be in; but it was just the state the major would have chosen to find her in when he came back charged with Lord Carr-Lyon's message.

"Well, Kate, my dear," he said as he entered the room, eyeing her curiously from under his lowered lids. "Got down, then; tired—not too much, I hope?"

"I am not tired in the least," she said, as she stood looking out of the window.

"Bravo! just what I said to Carr-Lyon. I said I should come back and find you as fresh as paint."

Kate made no response to this, and with a little cough, the major continued:

"I've just been up to Lydcote to congratulate Carr-Lyon on the great success of the ball last night. He seemed very pleased. By George, you'll make a pair in the way of constitution, for I found him as fit as a lark, and as bright as a star," and as he uttered this gratuitous falsehood the major rubbed his hands and nodded benevolently. "He was coming down here to see you, but I told him that you probably would not be up, and—er—and so he gave me a message for you."

"Yes?" she said absently, her eyes fixed upon the gray waves.

"Yes—ahem!—a very particular message. Can you not guess what it is?"

"I could not possibly," she answered listlessly. "How should I?"

"No, just so. But I thought perhaps—well, it was a very tender message, very tender. Kate—are you listening?" he broke off, irritated by the immovability of the beautiful face.

"To every word, papa."

"I thought perhaps—what is there to look at out of the window?"

"The usual scene," said Kate, with a sigh, and she came to the fireplace. "What is Lord Carr-Lyon's message, papa?"

"Well, my dear Kate, to put it bluntly, he—er—is very anxious that your engagement shouldn't be a long one, and I must say I agree with him. I have always considered long engagements peculiarly imprudent. When—er—two young people have made up their minds that they are in love with each other, the—er—sooner they are married the better. You agree with me, I am sure, Kate, my dear."

"I have never given the subject a thought," she replied. "But what has this to do with Lord Carr-Lyon's message, papa?"

"A great deal, my dear child. Carr-Lyon has been talking to me, and I must say he expressed himself remarkably well, and with admirable taste and—er—good feeling, and—er—in short he particularly desires that the marriage should take place soon."

Kate raised her face with a little start.

"Soon?"

"Yes; that is to say—he mentioned—three weeks."

"In three weeks!" she repeated in a dull voice.

Then the slight color forsook her face and she stood looking at him with a strange look in her great eyes—the look a stag wears when it hears the bay of the hounds close behind it and feels their hot breath on its flanks.

"Er—exactly. Now, my dear Kate, you are a sensible girl. I have always said that you were a sensible girl, and you know you must look at this matter from a sensible point of view. Carr-Lyon is a nobleman with a large estate and an old title, and—er—he naturally is anxious to—er—settle in life and—er—all that. I know you will have all sorts of objections——"

"In three weeks!" she breathed, her bosom rising and falling as if she were panting for air.

"—I know you will have all sorts of objections, but, my dear child, you must remember that we owe something to others. That—er—as your father, I am anxious to see you provided for before I—er—" he took out his handkerchief and wiped away a dry tear—"quit this mortal scene; and, in fact, I make a personal favor of it, my dear. Now let us talk the matter over. Let me hear what your objections are——"

She raised her eyes to his.

"I have no objections," she said in a low, steady voice.

The major started and looked at her as if he could scarcely believe his ears; then his face grew red and his small eyes lit up.

"My dear child!" he exclaimed, and he held out his arms, but somehow he did not carry out his intention of embracing her: something in the white face and fixed eyes prevented him, and he left his arms drop to his sides. "My dear Kate, I—er—I am delighted to find you so—sensible!"

"Yes, it is sensible, is it not?" she said, with icy bitterness. "One ought not to trifle with such a prize as we have gained, ought we, papa? There are so many slips between the cup and the lip, are there not?"

The major muttered some response, and shuffled his feet nervously. He had never seen her in this mood before.

"In three weeks! It is not a long notice, but I daresay it can be done. Lady Warner will help me! And in three weeks I shall be the wife of Lord Carr-Lyon," she said, almost to herself.

"The Countess of Carr-Lyon! Think of it, my dear Kate!" he exclaimed exultingly. "One of the principal women in England! Think of it!" and he rubbed his hands.

"Yes, I do think of it," she said, with a smile that was half sad, half bitter. "Will you tell Lord Carr-Lyon, or shall I write him a note?" she asked, with such perfect calmness that the major eyed her curiously and half fearfully.

"Well—er—of course he would be better pleased with a note," he said; "and, look here, Kate, if you will write it, I will take it to him; that will please him more than anything else."

"Very well," she said, and she sat down and wrote slowly and steadily:

"Dear Lord Carr-Lyon- Papa tells me that you wish me to marry you in three weeks. If you do wish it, I am willing to do so. Yours very truly,

"KATE MEDDON."

"Er—er—rather cool, isn't it, my dear?" said the major.

"I cannot rewrite it," she said in a quiet tone.

"No, no; never mind. He will be satisfied. Yes, indeed! This will make Carr-Lyon happy if anything will. And you will be happy yourself, eh, Kate? Oh, I'm sure you will!"

"Do you think so?" she said; then she repeated her words with a sudden wildness, "Do you think I shall be happy? Tell me the truth, papa!" and she laid her hand on his arm, and fixed her eyes on his small, shrinking ones with a desperate entreaty. "Tell me, you know the world, you have seen people marry—as I am marrying; are they ever happy? Do you think I shall grow not to care, to—to be indifferent like other people? Why shouldn't I? I—I am not in love with anybody else—I do not care who I marry! Tell me, papa——" the torrent of her wild words there stopped, and she turned away from him with a bitter smile.

"I am talking nonsense, am I not? But I do not often do it, do I? Take this note to Lord Carr-Lyon, papa. He—and you—at any rate, will be satisfied, and I will go to Lady Warner."

The major, a little frightened by her strange outburst, put on his coat and started for Lydcote.

He found the master of the magnificent place still wrapped in the gaudy dressing gown and seated in the easy chair.

"Oh! you've come back?" he said, looking up morosely.

"Yes, I've come back my boy!" said the major.

"And she won't do it? I thought not," said Carr-Lyon, biting his cigar viciously; "don't trouble to wrap it up in a lot of fine phrases——"

"Here's Kate's answer, read it for yourself," said the major.

He took the dainty note and read it, then his face flamed and his eyes sparkled with an unholy fire.

"By Heaven, she will!" he exclaimed, and he rose from the chair and took two or three turns across the room. "She will! All right, major, you shall have the money! Yes you shall have the money! In three weeks!"

He drew a long breath, and smiled,—a curious smile—as he raised his glass to his lips, and eyed the major over the rim.

"Yes, in three weeks I shall entrust my dear child to your care. Be kind to her, my dear boy; she is all I have left in the world——"

His future son-in-law interrupted him with a burst of harsh laughter.

"'Pon my word, major, you ought to have gone on the stage! You'd make a splendid heavy father! You old humbug! There, that will do; that sentimental business is wasted upon me! What do you think I should want to marry her for if I didn't mean to take care of her?" and his eyes glistened cunningly. "Here, let's go down to the town; and order some togs for the occasion!" and, with a grin, he went and rang the bell for his valet.

They went in the dog-cart, and his lordship drove with more than his usual recklessness, causing the major to cling to the side-rail, and gasp with fright, as every now and again the vehicle caught on the curb or lurched round the corner.

"You'll br—re—ak y—your n—neck, my d—dear boy!" he managed to jerk out once, but his lordship only laughed.

"Not till I'm married, major," he said. "I may be glad to do so then, perhaps, eh!" and he whipped the horse up again until the high-spirited animal was almost beside himself with rage and fright. "You hold on, you're all right! Look here, we'll have a jolly afternoon in honor of the occasion, shall we? In three weeks! Didn't she say it was short notice? How fond of me she must be!" and he grinned maliciously.

"She is, my dear boy, very fond of you! Never saw anything like it!"

"No, or I either," retorted Carr-Lyon.

They "made an afternoon" of it, but though his lordship drank heavily, he kept remarkably quiet; and there was a restless, shifty look in his eyes which rather puzzled the major. However he managed to draw a little cheque "on account," and went home happy.

Three weeks is not long in which to prepare one's wedding garments when one is going to marry an earl, but Kate's preparations were not very extensive.

It was all one to her whether she was married in a black dress or white dress; and it was Lady Warner who undertook the direction of the *trousseau*.

"Just as you think proper—get what you like," was Kate's invariable answer when she was consulted about anything, and Lady Warner declared that she had never known a girl with so little vanity.

"I suppose you mean to get most of the things, excepting those you absolutely want for the wedding, in London, dear? I hear you are going to spend the honeymoon there."

"Yes, I suppose so," Kate had answered indifferently.

It was equally nothing to her whether she spent her honeymoon in London or Timbuctoo; and it was Lord Carr-Lyon's idea that town, with the theatres and the clubs handy, would be more cheerful than Torquay or Naples.

So he had taken a furnished house in

Park Lane for a couple of months, and sent some horses up, and meant to be, as he said, "comfortable."

But as the days passed swiftly he seemed to become less "comfortable," and to grow more mood and silent.

He spent nearly all his time either at the club or in his smoking room at Lydcote, and drank considerably, scarcely ever feeling elated, but at times displaying a curious kind of fury and irritation.

Once or twice he had in the course of conversation with men in the club, asked them in a casual kind of way if they had ever met with a Clifford Raven; but never got a satisfactory answer.

No one had ever known a man of that name, and if he had not seen the major's face change and grow pale at the mention of the name, he could almost succeed in persuading himself that the anonymous letter was a hoax; but there could be no mistaking the major's sudden pallor, when he asked him if he knew Clifford Raven, and Carr-Lyon was firmly convinced that he was being hoodwinked and deceived by them.

Of Kate he saw very little.

When he called—which he did very seldom—she always saw him, but no word or sign of endearment passed between them, and after a few moments she would get away from him, saying that she was busy; and he made no complaint.

His time was coming, coming quickly too, for the day before the wedding was at hand, and twenty-four hours only stood between Kate and destiny!

Carr-Lyon had spent a sleepless night, and after his morning draught, put on his coat and went out.

He felt too restless to remain in the house, and yet had no object for a walk, so, in the half-hearted way of men of his class, he sauntered down to the broken parade, and stood looking at the sea.

To-morrow morning she would be his—his absolutely. His wife! his slave! And to-morrow, before the day closed, he would know who Clifford Raven was. And, at the thought, his teeth clicked together, and his hands, thrust into the pockets of his coat, clenched tightly.

He was so lost in the anticipation of his coming triumph, when proud Kate should be brought to her knees, and pay for all her past coldness to him, that he did not hear a step behind him, and started when a cheery, chirpy voice said:

"Good-morning, my lord!"

He turned with a little start, and swore under his breath, when he saw that it was only the doctor, and merely bestowed a surly nod in response, for Lord Carr-Lyon was far too great a man to waste civility on doctors "and that kind of people."

"A wild morning, my lord," said the doctor, holding on to his hat. "I hope we shall have a brighter day to-morrow. 'Happy is the bride the sun shines on!' you know; and we all wish Miss Kate every happiness."

"Thanks," grunted his lordship.

"And I think the wind's dropping a little even now," went on the doctor. "I shall have a hard fight of it along the cliff."

"What the deuce do you go for, then?" remarked Carr-Lyon.

The doctor smiled.

"Duty, my lord, duty! I've got a patient in Wood's Quarry. A very ticklish case, too."

"Oh?" was the response, indifferently. "An accident?"

"Ah, don't quite know," said the doctor. "Not an accident, I should say; but the whole thing's kept very for the present. It's a most romantic and interesting case."

"Is it?" said his lordship curtly, inwardly wondering at "the fellow's cheek" in bothering him about his "beastly case."

"Yes," continued the doctor cheerily; "most romantic. I've had a hard tussle to bring him through, though he is a splendid fellow, with the physique of a Roman athlete. I shouldn't have got him round as well as I have, indeed, if it wasn't for his nurse, pretty little Nellie Wood."

Carr-Lyon swung round, then turned again and kept his eyes fixed on the sea.

"Oh, a girl, eh? His sweetheart, I suppose?"

The doctor laughed.

"Well, I don't know. I could answer for her, I'm afraid, but not for him."

"What—what is he?—a quarryman?" asked his lordship.

"Well, yes, after a fashion. Yes, he is certainly the manager of the quarry, but he is certainly a gentleman, poor fellow."

"Oh, he's the manager of the quarry, is he?" said Carr-Lyon with assumed indifference: "and you say it wasn't an accident?"

"No; I think not—I am sure not, indeed; but I am speaking in confidence, my lord, for the good people who are taking care of him are anxious to keep the affair quiet."

"Then somebody went for him—is that what you mean?" asked Carr-Lyon, his heart beating.

"Well, yes; I think so. I think he was attacked at night by one of the quarrymen; and I think I could lay my hand upon the man—though that is the wrong way of putting it, seeing that he has completely disappeared. By the way, it occurred on the night of the Lydcote ball, and the attack must have been made when he was returning from it. He had been up to see the fireworks, I think. I am inclined to believe that the culprit was a jealous rival; Miss Nelly is very pretty, and the man I suspect was known to have been courting her before this other young fellow arrived at the quarry."

Carr-Lyon remained silent a moment.

"And he disappeared—the fellow who did it—you say?" he said.

"Yes, completely, my lord. Looks rather black against him, doesn't it? I don't like the idea of his getting off scot-free, for my patient may not pull through it even now; and if he should, I fear that his mind will always be affected by the blow. He has the most extraordinary hallucinations I have——"

The little doctor stopped, suddenly remembering that it would scarcely do to tell the earl that the injured man fancied himself Lord Carr-Lyon.

"Oh! off his head, is he?" said Carr-Lyon, slowly. Then, after a pause, he said, "What's this young fellow's name?"

"Raven—Clifford Raven, my lord" said the doctor.

Lord Carr-Lyon set his teeth hard, and remained perfectly motionless for a moment or two.

"Rum name," he said, and his own voice sounded strained and unnatural.

"Isn't it? I'm rather inclined to suspect that it's a feigned one," said the doctor, who was quite enjoying this light chat with the great man of Sandford. "There is something mysterious about the young fellow; as I said before, he is most certainly a gentleman, and a manager in a small quarry; and then, by the way, on the night of the ball he was in dress clothes."

"In dress clothes?"

"Yes," and the doctor laughed. "When I was called to him, I found him in the regulation evening attire, and remarkably handsome and distinguished he looked. Mysterious, isn't it, my lord?"

"Yes," said Carr-Lyon, though fully

"And you say he was knocked about by some fellow who thought he was sweet upon his girl, Nellie Wood?"

The doctor nodded sapiently,

"I feel sure of it. In confidence I may as well tell you the name of the man I suspect. He is a young fellow called Vyse—Frenchy Vyse, they nickname him in the quarry."

"Frenchy Vyse," repeated Lord Carr-Lyon: then he said, "You know him? Can he write?"

The doctor stared.

"Can he write, my lord?"

Lord Carr-Lyon reddened.

"I—I mean—I supposed he was quite an ignorant man? I only asked out of curiosity, don't-cha-know?"

"Oh, quite ignorant, like the rest of the men," said the doctor; "and just the sort of man to do this sort of thing! Well, I must be getting on. My best wishes for to-morrow, my lord."

"Thanks!" said his lordship. "Where's this quarry you've been talking about?"

"In a little bay around the point there," replied the doctor, pointing. "It is very nice walk to it, and the place is well worth seeing if you care to——"

"No, thanks," drawled his lordship. "I hate that kind of thing! Good-morning," and he turned and sauntered off.

* * * * * *

Clifford lay back upon the pillows with which Nellie had propped him up, his eyes closed, a peaceful look on his face.

He was very white and very thin, and the hands resting upon the coverlid looked very wasted; but he had turned the corner which leads from the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and as the cheery little doctor put it, "was on the right road at last."

He was still weak, however, and spoke but little save to thank his devoted nurse every time she ministered to him.

For Nellie, these three weeks had proved the happiest in her life. To be in the same room with the loved one, to sit by him as he slept, to watch the dear face; sometimes to venture to kiss the white, wasted hand, and lay her head on the pillow beside his.

These were innocent joys to her loving, child-like nature, and Nellie, getting very pale and thin herself, lived in Paradise.

But for her, as the doctor remarked daily, Clifford—strong as he was—must have gone over to the majority; nothing but the most devoted and untiring nursing could have saved him; and Nellie joyed in the thought that she had in some measure paid back her debt, and devoted the life he saved to saving his.

Now, since the first moment of his recovery from his long swoon, Clifford had not repeated that startling assertion, "I am Lord Carr-Lyon;" and Nellie, her father, and the doctor himself, had begun to hope that the hallucination was passing away; and yet Nellie noticed that the sick man would lie for hours with a strange smile on his face, and a peculiar light in his eyes, as if something had happened or was going to happen that gave him satisfaction.

But he said nothing, and neither of them spoke of the ball, or Frenchy Vyse, or, indeed, of anything in connection with the world outside the quarry.

On the day of his chat with Lord Carr-Lyon, the doctor was most cheerful over his patient.

"He'll do very well now," he said, nodding with a look of satisfaction. "It's been a tough fight, but we have won it, you and I, Miss Nellie. We sha'n't have to trouble the undertaker this time, Mr. Raven."

Clifford smiled.

"No," he said; "I do not feel very much like dying; but I know where I should should have been by this time if it had not been for Nellie," and he stretched out his hand towards hers.

She took it timidly, and her fingers closed over it with a gentle pressure, while the color came glowing into her pale cheeks.

"No man in the world ever had such a nurse," said Clifford, his eyes fixed on hers gratefully. "Never since the world began. But I wish you'd send her away now, doctor. I know she is knocking herself up; look how pale she is, and she used to be like a June rose. Now, Nellie, you must listen to what the doctor says and leave me to get on alone. Why, I'm all right now, and so strong——"

"That you cannot hold your cup of beef tea," she put in in a low voice and with a faint smile.

The doctor laughed.

"I don't suppose Miss Nellie would go if I sent her," he said. "Seriously, though, Mr. Raven, you need careful nursing even now. But, look here, Miss Nellie I shall insist upon your getting a little change. Suppose you take a walk round the quarry this afternoon?"

"If she does not, I will get up and go to a hospital," said Clifford with mock sternness.

Nellie smiled and smoothed his pillows.

"Very well," she said. "I will go out—for ten minutes—this afternoon.

"All right," said the doctor. "I've sent you some tonic, Mr. Raven: that's what you want now. That and freedom from worry: you're not worrying yourself, are you?" and he looked searchingly at the thin face.

Clifford smiled.

"No," he said; "I am not worrying; but I want to get well and about again, for I have something to do that must be done at once."

"Oh, nonsense," said the doctor. "If it's the work at the quarry, Mr. Wood——"

"Says as there isn't any call to think about that," said Mr. Wood himself, entering at the moment. "The only job that's urgent is getting hold of that Frenchy Vyse; and I'll have him, if I have to spend a hundred pounds," and his face grew red.

Clifford's brows came together thoughtfully. Then he glanced at Nellie, who sat with her face downcast, and turned away from him.

"Mr. Wood," he said in his thin, clear voice, "I want you to do me a favor. I want you to let poor Vyse alone!"

"Let him alone, by jiggers!" exclaimed Mr. Wood. "That's a likely story! I'll let him alone, when I've hunted him into Exeter Jail!"

"No," said Clifford, gently but firmly. "We won't take any trouble about Vyse! The fault was not altogether his——"

"Then you admit as he did it?" said Mr. Wood sharply.

"I admit and tell everything to you, my friend," said Clifford, with a smile; "but to no one else! If you caught Vyse I should not prosecute him, or give evidence against him."

"You wouldn't?"

"No! You don't know all the story; but you'll admit that he received some provocation when I tell you that I threw him off the cliff ledge and nearly killed him."

"What did you do that for?" demanded Mr. Wood in amazement.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Bric-a-Brac.

DAGO.—This word now generally applied to Italians all over the United States, originated in Louisiana, where it at first denoted people of Spanish birth or parentage, but was gradually extended so as to apply to Italians and Portuguese also. It is undoubtedly a corruption of Diego, (James) a common name among the Spaniards, San Diego, or St. James, being their patron saint.

THE MAGIC SHIRT.—It was in olden times prepared as follows:—On Christmas eve three young girls, under seven years of age, were to spin a thread, weave it into a cloth, and sew it into a shirt between sunset and sunrise. The shirt was to reach from the neck to the thigh, and to be without sleeves. On the breast was to be embroidered two crosses and two heads; the head to the right was to wear a long beard and a helmet, and that to the left "a crown resembling the crown worn by Satan." A shirt thus prepared was reputed invulnerable. Nor was this its only virtue; females, it is believed, would find it more powerful than the old talisman—especially taken from the body of a dead man.

RISE OF THE CRESCENT.—The crescent, a representation of the half moon with its horns turned upward, was an ornament frequently worn by the Roman ladies in their hair. In ancient mythology it decorated the forehead of Astarte, the Syrian Venus, and of Diana. It was the emblem of the old city of Byzantium (the modern Constantinople) and, as such adorned its walls and public edifices, and was stamped upon its coins. The legend runs that when Philip of Macedon laid seige to that city (B.C. 340) he chose a night of unusual obscurity to attempt an assault, but his plans were foiled by a sudden radiance of the moon. In commemoration of this deliverance the crescent was assumed as the symbol of the city. This device was retained in Constantinople during the period when it became the head of the Eastern empire, and descended to the Mohammedan sultans, who accepted it as a good omen, seeing probably in its meaning an augury of increasing power.

ITS ORIGIN.—The origin of the first day of the fourth month in the year as the day on which to play silly practical jokes is now shrouded in the completest mystery. All we can do is to surmise, and endeavor to trace its history, but there research ends. One learned antiquary argues that the 25th of March being in one respect the New Year's day, the 1st of April was its octave or termination of its celebration. Another theory which has been advanced is that All Fools' Day was a humorous festival of the Jews, and had its origin in the mistake of Noah in sending the dove out of the Ark before the waters had abated. This was done on the first day of the month which, among the Hebrews corresponds to the first of April with us. To perpetuate the memory of this deliverance it was thought proper, when people forgot so remarkable a circumstance, to punish them by sending them on a bootless errand, similar to the ineffectual message upon which the bird was sent by the patriarch.

PRINTING.—When first the art of printing was discovered they only made use of one side of the leaf; they had not yet found out the expedient of impressing the other. Afterwards they thought of pasting the blank sides which made them appear like one leaf. Their blocks were made of soft wood, their letters carved; but, frequently breaking, the expense and trouble of gluing new letters suggested our moveable type, which have produced an almost miraculous celerity in this art. When their editions were to be curious, they omitted to printed the first letter of a chapter for which they left a blank space, that it might be painted or illuminated to the fancy of the purchaser. Several ancient volumes of these times have been found where these letters are wanting, as they neglected to have them printed. The initial carved letter, which is generally a fine woodcut, among our printed books, is evidently a remains or imitation of these ornaments. Among the very earliest books printed, which were religious, are wooden cuts in a coarse style, without the least shadowing or crossing of strokes, and these they inelegantly daubed over with colors, which they termed illuminating and sold at a cheap rate to those who could not afford to purchase costly missals, elegantly written and painted on vellum.

NOTHING, indeed, but the possession of some power, can with any certainty discover what, at bottom, is the true character of any man.

THE CHIMES.

BY P. G. G.

How merry the whole year round,
For prayer or the bridal hour,
They peal with a jocund sound,
Those bells from the ivied tower!
Yet the merriest peal of all, they say,
Is the chime of the bells on Christmas Day!

How sweet are the winds that blow
And melt Earth's icy chain,
When the flow'rs of Springtide glow,
And the rivers sing again!
Yet sweeter than breath of Spring, they say,
Is the chime of the bell, on Christmas Day!

And could but our mortal ears
Be deaf to the cries of Earth,
We might hear those ringing spheres
And the sounds of that heavenly mirth!
For above, as on earth below, they say,
There are hymns of joy on each Christmas Day!

It may not be; yet we know,
As we list to the bells' sweet sound,
That with love our bosoms glow
As we gaze on the dear ones round!
And "Oh, may your Christmas be merry," we say,
"As the chime of the bells on Christmas Day!"

ONLY A VIOLET.

BY D. G. H.

CHAPTER II.

SIR LEWIS and Mrs. Cameron were so different in mind and feeling. It was passing strange both should experience the same sentiments, when the door closed on the young pair.

Still, their regret sprang from widely opposite causes.

The practical mother hated every chance which gave Molly favors instead of her girls, while Sir Lewis thought it hard he was not in Keith's place, for those sweet brown eyes had impressed him strongly.

"Durant will be a valuable auxiliary to us in the ball," he said to Mrs. Cameron. "I never saw a fellow so good at planning things. I always tell him he ought to be secretary to some colonial magnate and arrange all the festivities. He'd be in his element most thoroughly!"

Mrs. Cameron smiled graciously.

"I suppose he is an old friend. I can see you are warmly attached to him!"

"Well, it began fourteen years ago, when he was my fag at Eton. We have never had a difference, but been sworn allies ever since."

"Is Mr. Durant English? It is such a foreign-sounding name!"

"I believe his father's family came of French extraction, but his mother, Lady Maude, was one of Lord Ogilvie's daughters, and Keith has always seemed more of a Tempest than a Durant."

Mrs. Cameron felt suddenly she had not been nearly gracious enough to Mr. Durant.

She had treated him somewhat as a humble friend of Sir Lewis, and lo! he stood revealed to her as an earl's grandson!

The good matron's father had begun life as an errand boy at five shillings a week. Only his own intense application and keen intellect raised him to the position of first lawyer in Netherton.

Her mother's origin was even lower down in the social scale, so that it is hardly wonderful Mrs. Cameron herself had an intense veneration for a title.

Meanwhile the paper and pencil seemed long in finding. Keith really had seized the letter and put it in his pocket while Molly was taking a sheet of paper from her aunt's blotting-book, so that it was not strange she sought in vain for the pencil she had seen that morning.

"Miss Lester!" said Mr. Durant, suddenly, "are you fond of dancing?"

Molly started.

"I love it dearly; but I have never danced at all, excepting at children's parties; where there was no one to help the stupid ones."

"Mrs. Allonby is going to give a large ball on New Year's Day, and I want you to promise me the first dance?"

"I shall not be there."

"I think you will. If we meet there will you promise me the first dance?"

"If you wish it; but——"

"We won't have any buts. Do you know I have your violet safe?"

"It must be faded!"

He looked at her a little keenly, but he saw she meant just what she said. He brought the piece of pencil reluctantly from his pocket, and gave it to her as though he had only just found it.

"I suppose we must go back to the drawing-room now! Remember, Miss Molly, you are coming to the ball, and you have promised me the first dance."

The three Miss Camerons returned, and were making talk for the Baronet. Sir Lewis was too perfectly well bred to let any one guess how they bored him, so their mother thought all was going on well, and felt so elated in consequence that she made no objection when Sir Lewis said, as he took leave—

"Then I may tell my mother she can rely on your not failing her, Mrs. Cameron? We may expect you and your young ladies for certain on the first."

"Of course you won't take Molly, mother?" said Alice, when the visitors were out of sight and hearing. "It would be absurd!"

"You know she has nothing fit to wear," chimed in Bertha, "and I don't believe she can dance a bit!"

"And we can't go five in a carriage," objected Maude. "All our dresses will be crushed!"

Molly was not there, though, I fear, no consideration for her feelings would have checked these amiable remarks even if she had been present.

"It's no use talking, girls. I shouldn't take the child if I could help it, depend upon it, but your father seems to have gone crazy about her, and declared she should come out this winter, whether I like it or not. Of course, if he insists on her going to the Towers I can't help it."

"Tell him she has nothing to wear, and it will make another carriage indispensable."

But Mr. Cameron replied, to all his wife's arguments, he meant Molly to go, as he should attend the ball himself.

The second carriage would be required in any case, and he would buy the child a ball dress.

"Much beauty there'll be about it if papa chooses it," said Maude, sarcastically. "Why, he doesn't know tarlatan from linsey!"

"He never offered to choose your clothes," said Mrs. Cameron, jealously. "I declare he seems quite daft about the girl, and she's nothing to look at either—nothing but a mass of brown hair and a pair of eyes too big for her face!"

But Mr. Cameron did not trust to his own taste, though his knowledge of dress was a little more extended than his daughter fancied.

There was a humble relation of his wife's quite lost sight of by her since the family rose in the world, who was earning an honest living as head of Messrs. Mason's dressmaking department.

She had once been a schoolfellow of Mary Cameron's, and the lawyer had always had a cheerful greeting for her when they met, so that they were quite friendly enough for him to ask her a favor.

He called on her at the shop, and told her "he wanted a dress fit for a young lady to wear at her first party."

"It's for poor Mary's child, you know, Laura. I'll tell her to send round one of her old frocks that you may know the size. I don't want the child to see the dress till it's finished. I'm not a rich man, and I've nine children, so don't make it anything elaborate, but as pretty a toilet as you can manage, and perhaps you'd put in gloves and fal-lals of that sort. She's coming out at the Allonby ball on New Year's night, and I don't want her to look as though she'd stepped out of Noah's Ark. My wife's enough to do with rigging out her own girls, so I said I'd see to Molly."

Miss Stone was well aware of that, as her cousin (who ignored the relationship and treated her most condescendingly) he paid a visit to the show-room that very morning, and given an extensive order.

In her way of business, of course, Miss Stone would have something to do with the three toilets of the Misses Cameron, but she would not throw her whole soul into the cause, as she was prepared to do in the matter of Molly's first ball dress.

As for Molly, she was in a happy dream. She was to go to the ball and have a new frock for it!

She was to see Allonby Towers, long her greatest ambition, and be introduced to the sweet-faced lady she had seen at church on Christmas morning, who seemed to the girl's imagination fairer and more charming than any of the guests who accompanied her.

And last, but in no ways least, she would meet Keith Durant, and dance with him!

Can you wonder that with such a brilliant prospect in the future Molly put up with daily slights and unkindness, seeming hardly to know of their existence?

She felt like Cinderella in the good old tale, only that twelve o'clock would have no fatal significance for her since Mrs. Cameron meant to stay till the very end of the ball.

Christmas passed uneventfully, excepting it was very strange how often Sir Lewis needed to consult Mrs. Cameron.

He and his faithful friend came over quite four times in the week between Christmas and the ball.

You would have thought Mrs. Allonby had never given an entertainment in her life, and the lawyer's wife had done nothing else, so often was her opinion solicited on divers points with the most delightful eagerness and deference.

The evening came at last. Perhaps Laura Stone thought the whole family would be invisible, engaged in their own rooms, and she might be a real help to Molly without encountering any of her relations; for about seven o'clock, when the shop was closed, she just stopped round, and asked the servant if she could see Miss Lester.

Molly was only too delighted for the chance of thanking her for making her such a lovely dress, and did the honors of her chilly attic with grateful pride.

The dress was, indeed, a picture, and yet it was far less costly than the toilets of Molly's cousins. Laura Stone possessed exquisite taste, and Molly's attire had been a labor of love.

It was pure white, and looked like tulle; only it was not tulle, but some kindred material frosted over as though it had been touched by the crystal dew-drops.

It was very long, for everyone wore trains at that time, and was looped up on one side to reveal a white silk petticoat.

It was square in front, to show the girlish throat, while the sleeves ended at the elbow, and left bare the round, white arms.

"You want just a touch of color," said Miss Stone, doubtfully. "I wish I'd put in a knot of crimson ribbons!"

A knock at the door, and enter cook with a cardboard box.

"I would bring it up myself, Miss Molly. I made up my mind no one else should get it, whatever it was."

Molly was speechless with delight, as from its wrappings she took a bouquet composed entirely of violets and snowdrops, while, as though divining Miss Stone's dilemma, the box was perfectly lined with violets arranged in tiny bundles.

Molly's cheeks burnt as she caught sight of a slip of paper. While her kindly assistant was fastening knots of violets on her dress she managed to read the few words traced in pencil—

"In exchange for another violet we know of."

"She looks a picture!" cried cook, when Miss Stone, having put the finishing touch to her handywork, was departing rather hurriedly, lest she should come across her cousin Susan.

The old maid's eyes filled.

"She has her mother's face," she said, sadly. "Heaven grant she may be happier!"

"It won't be missie's fault if she is," said cook, bluntly. "I never saw people persecute anyone as she and the young ladies do Miss Molly! It makes me mad—it does!"

But Molly had forgotten all sad thoughts. To look at her one might have imagined she had never known a sorrow, she seemed so bright and lovely.

Cinderella's godmother had done her work right thoroughly.

No attire could have been more simple and less costly, and yet it was the most becoming and suitable ball dress for a young girl that could possibly have been devised.

Mrs. Cameron looked askance at the violets, but cook had kept the secret, and the matron put them down to her husband's extravagance.

A pretty penny he must have spent on that girl's get-up. If ever poor woman had a right to wish her husband had no relatives, it was surely she—Susan Cameron.

The party divided for the drive. Mrs. Cameron and her two elder girls had the first carriage, her husband followed, with his niece and Maude.

John Cameron had married for ambition and worldly motives, because Susan's fortune and her father's influence would advance him professionally.

As he gazed from Maude's face to her cousin's, perhaps he understood his mistake.

Molly looked a little lady, a stray princess, it might be, going to some entertainment given in her honor. Maude, in pink satin and fawn-colored lace, had a hopelessly, over-dressed air.

She was pretty, but it was in a common style. No one could have taken her for a damsel of high degree.

"Your first ball," she said slightingly to her cousin. "Of course you don't expect any partners—no one knows you?"

Molly sighed.

"It will be pleasant to see everyone enjoying themselves, even if I don't often dance, and I want to see the conservatory at the Towers. Perhaps, if no one asks me to dance, you will take me there, Uncle John?"

"I don't think it will be as bad as that, Molly," said John Cameron, kindly. "I know one or two young fellows who are fond of dancing."

Maude opened her eyes.

"You never trouble yourself to find us partners," she said, in quite an injured tone.

"My dear, I never saw you in want of them."

And then there was no time for more. The fly had stopped before the porticoed entrance, and they were walking up the terrace steps.

The lawyer looked in vain for his wife, but a familiar voice interposed.

"Mrs. Cameron and her daughters arrived a few minutes' ago. If you will take Miss Maude, I will show the way to the ballroom!"

It was Keith Durant. He had drawn Molly's hand through his arm, and was walking forward with her. There was nothing for it, Maude had to follow with her father.

At the entrance to the ballroom stood a lady in soft, gray satin. She was talking to Sir Lewis Allonby, on whose arm she leant.

"Lewis, who is that beautiful child? See, coming towards us with Keith?"

"It is Miss Lester, mother."

Mrs. Allonby was accounted haughty and exclusive; but, instead of a formal bow when Molly passed, she took the little hand in hers.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Lester. I hear this is your first ball. I hope it will be a pleasant one!"

Molly smiled, and the smile made a captive of Mrs. Allonby even more than the low, sweet words of thanks.

"Lewis," said his mother, as Keith and his companion passed on, "I am quite sure I have seen that little girl before."

Sir Lewis shook his head.

"I think you must be mistaken, mother. She has never been out of Netherton since she was a baby."

"Well, her smile is perfectly familiar to me. She is dancing with Keith. They make a charming couple!"

But Sir Lewis did not seem to find the sight quite such a pleasant one as his mother.

He was conscious of but one wish, as he saw Molly veering round in Keith's arms in the mazes of the waltz—a consuming desire to be in her partner's place—and, alas! he was in his own house, and as host had at least half a score of "duty dances" with matrons and neighbor demoiselles before he could venture to gratify his own longings, and inscribe his name on Molly's programme.

CHAPTER III.

THE ball was a great success—that was the general verdict. Of course there were a few dissenting voices, but the majority were of the opinion the whole affair had gone off famously.

Mollie Lester, leaning back in her corner of the carriage felt as if she had had a taste of Paradise.

She had danced every dance, and Sir Lewis himself had shown her the conservatory, while gentle Mrs. Allonby had found time to talk to her for a few minutes, and to say she hoped some day Mrs. Cameron would spare her niece to spend a long afternoon at the Towers.

The other girls were not quite so satisfied. True, Sir Lewis had danced with each one, but the rest of the time they had to be content with their old Netherton acquaintances, and had not penetrated into the more aristocratic circle formed by the guests staying at the Towers and a few county people.

It had been a very pleasant ball, but their detested little cousin had been preferred before them, and not one of the three had the sense to perceive that Molly's good fortune was not her own fault.

The next day Mr. Cameron was quite glad to escape to his office, for the domestic atmosphere was very stormy. The schoolboys kept the house in an uproar, and made the smaller children utterly unmanageable.

The three young ladies had headaches, and breakfasted in bed, poor little Molly being kept flying from one room to another with tea and toast and other light refreshments suited to such interesting invalids.

By the afternoon they got up and dressed and went into the drawing-room to discuss the ball with their mother, and hear her comments.

Mrs. Cameron was not a lady, but she had a large amount of shrewdness, and her judgment on any matter where her prejudices were not concerned was as a rule very clever.

Unfortunately, she allowed her personal feelings to blind her a great deal; and so, when the girls demanded if it had not been a delightful ball, and whether she did not think Sir Lewis charming, she responded in the affirmative, and also said she thought the Baronet had been most attentive to Alice, and, really, she shouldn't be surprised if next New Year's day found her second daughter ruling at the Towers as Lady Allonby.

What she founded her bright visions on it would have been hard to say.

Alice was the least common of the three sisters, and sang well, in a rather florid style. She also possessed a grain of good taste, which, as she inclined to plumpness, made her dress always in black or dark colors.

She certainly had looked her best last night in Spanish lace, with trimmings of pale blue, and Sir Lewis had looked less *distrait* in dancing with her than with her sisters; still, it was indeed magnifying matters to dream that he had paid her any marked attention.

"Bertha is the eldest," went on Mrs. Cameron, who was given to plain speaking, "but Sir Lewis is a trifle too grave for her. Depend upon it, girls, it's Alice as 'll be Lady Allonby, and then she'll know how to provide good husbands for her sisters."

Bertha laughed good-temperedly.

"Alice is welcome for me," she said frankly. "I'll confess I liked dancing with Sir Lewis just for the honor of the thing, but my quadrille with him was awfully prosy—I did not enjoy it one scrap. And if ten minutes of his society seems so tedious I must say I shouldn't like a lifetime of it!"

"You didn't talk to him about the right things," suggested her mother. "Never mind, it's just as well you don't all fancy him; he can't marry three wives!"

"Mamma," began Maude, the spiteful one of the family, "did you ever see anything so disgraceful as Molly's conduct last night? She flirted outrageously!"

"That girl is the plague of my life," declared Mrs. Cameron. "I do wish I could get rid of her!"

"She looked quite pretty last night," admitted Alice, "and I think some of her partners thought so."

Mrs. Cameron drew herself up with quite an air.

"I don't think any of the gentlemen we met last night would care to marry Mary Lester," she replied scornfully.

"Mr. Durant was very attentive to her."

"Mr. Durant! An earl's grandson! Impossible!"

"He may be an Earl's grandson," retorted Maude; "but he has no money. He told father he had only four hundred a year of his own, and no profession. I don't think the fact of his having a rich and noble grandfather makes him eligible. He will have to look out for an heiress. In the meantime he likes to play with simpletons like Molly."

The days passed on after that ball till the new year was a fortnight old. The Camerons had all been to call on Mrs. Allonby, but she was out.

It was felt a very great honor that she had returned their visit after a very short interval, and begged Mrs. Cameron to let two of the girls come and stay with her at the Towers.

"Most of my young friends have left us, but I will do my best to make your girls happy if you will spare Miss Alice and her cousin to us."

"Then Sir Lewis is serious, and means to propose to Alice," decided Mrs. Cameron in her own mind; "but what on earth do they want with Molly?"

Aloud.

"I am sure, my lady, my Alice will be delighted; but Molly is nothing but a schoolgirl. I shouldn't think of troubling you with her."

"But I wish it specially," pleaded Mrs. Allonby. "Do you know, Miss Lester's face reminds me of a very dear friend, and she seems just the sort of girl to be happy at home with an old lady, while her cousin rides and skates!"

These tactics succeeded. Mrs. Cameron caught up the idea that Molly was to be the companion of her hostess, while Alice enjoyed the Baronet's attentions.

Molly was quite welcome to absorb Mrs. Allonby's favors, so long as she did not engross her son.

The lawyer's wife knew perfectly that the widow's fortune was very slender. Apart from her son she could not afford any very grand establishment.

Alice would not care for a mother-in-law permanently located at the Towers, so if Mrs. Allonby took a fancy to Molly it might be of real service to her mother by-and-by.

"I don't mind," returned Alice, when her sister pitied her for having Molly as a companion. "If she takes Mrs. Allonby off our hands she will be a service. She is just the sort of girl to be happy with an old lady!"

So the two girls left the red-brick house—the lawyer having first given Laura Stone a commission on Molly's account—and Mrs. Allonby received them with winning hospitality.

She knew she was acting strangely, that the county would marvel at her asking her lawyer's family instead of her nobler neighbors; but she was used to please herself without caring anything for public opinion.

She wanted Molly, and she had seen at once Molly could not be had without a cousin.

Alice seemed the least objectionable of the three sisters—hence the selection.

"You know, Lewis," she said to her son, the morning before the guests came, "if Miss Cameron were very fascinating I shouldn't have dared to ask her. It would not be fair to Keith to expose him to any dangers of that sort."

Sir Lewis smiled, half dreamily.

"You are very careful, mother!"

"I am very fond of Keith," replied Mrs. Allonby, "and I should never forgive myself if any carelessness of mine wrecked the dear boy's prospects."

"Well, I don't think you need be afraid, mother. I fancy Alice Cameron is not likely to work havoc with Keith's heart."

It was a very pleasant party just those five—Sir Lewis, his friend, the two girls, and the quiet, kindly hostess.

Sometimes there were friends in the evening. Then there were drives and walks, skating excursions, long rides through the beautiful country, plenty of charming nooks; in short, Mrs. Allonby did her utmost to please her young guests, and she succeeded.

Molly felt simply as though she were living in some happy dream, while Alice had but one trouble—why did not Sir Lewis speak out?

"You see, Molly," for lack of a better confidante she was forced to talk to Molly in these days, "there is not the slight cause for delay!"

"No," said Molly, slowly, "I suppose not!"

"He must be in love with me, or he would never have got Mrs. Allonby to ask me here. Mother says she would not have either of the others; she had set her mind on me. 'Besides, we are always paired off together. He must want to marry me, I am quite sure of it, and yet we have been here nearly three weeks! The day after to-morrow we are going home, and yet he has never said a single word of his wishes! It is most extraordinary!"

"Perhaps he is shy!" suggested Molly, feeling something was expected of her. "He may think you have not known him long enough."

"Then it's very foolish of him," said Alice, pettishly. "He can't expect me to propose to him. Here we are going home in two days, and nothing settled at all. The girls will tease my life out."

"Our visit has flown," said Molly, with a sigh. "I'm sure it doesn't seem a week since we came!"

"Well, it's nearly three. I don't expect we shall be staying here again until I am married. If you behave nicely I may invite you then. I must say you have improved very much, Molly!"

"Will Mrs. Allonby live with you, Alice?"

"Heaven forbid! I don't think she likes me any better than I do her. Well, I wish Sir Lewis would be a little quicker. One thing, Mr. Durant is going away to-morrow; perhaps he's waiting for that, and thinks he shall have a better opportunity."

Molly looked up.

"Mr. Durant going away! Why?"

"My good child, he can't live here. He has been at the Towers over seven weeks. I think myself it is high time he went home."

"And how did you hear it?"

"He told me himself. It seems his grandfather has come up to town for the season, and wants him."

"Then he won't come back?"

"Not for ages. Why, Molly, he doesn't live here. You seem to think the Towers his home!"

Mrs. Allonby had a headache that afternoon.

Sir Lewis and Alice drove into Netherton to settle with Mrs. Cameron the time of the girl's return.

Mr. Durant had gone out perhaps also to Netherton.

Molly had the afternoon at her own disposal. A strange pain was tugging at her heart. The pleasure of the last three weeks seemed almost forgotten.

She was again the little lonely waif whom no one loved. Poor child! she did not know what made all the world seem blank to her just because Keith Durant was going away.

She stood leaning against a tree, much in the same way as she had stood on the birthday, when she had first seen Mr. Durant. How very long ago it seemed! Counting by days and weeks it was less than two months, but to the girlish heart it was an eternity.

Nothing would ever be the same again. This taste of pleasure, this glimpse of happiness, had spoilt poor little Cinderella for a hard, toilsome life.

Never more could she be content to be the humble little drudge in the red brick house.

No; she could never stay at Netherton now; she would always be thinking of the Towers, and the happy time she had spent there. No; like her mother, she would go out into the world and seek her fortune.

"It is such a beautiful world!" said Molly, half speaking her thoughts aloud. "Surely, somewhere in it there must be a little niche for me!"

"Molly!"

She looked up. Keith Durant stood at her side. How long he had been there she had no idea.

Molly thought of her tear-stained cheeks and blushed. Perhaps Mr. Durant really liked her as a little childish friend, and had come to find her, that they two might have a last little chat together before he went away to-morrow.

"What is the matter, Molly? What have you been crying for?"

"Nothing," said Molly, stoutly; "and I haven't been crying—at least, not very much."

Keith smiled sadly.

"Molly, you can't deceive me, and I know you have been crying. Won't you tell me what has happened to trouble you?"

No answer.

Mr. Durant persisted.

"I thought," he said, reproachfully, "we were to be friends? Friends have no secrets from each other, Molly."

Molly looked up, her beautiful brown eyes shining through a mist of tears.

"You will only laugh at me," she said, simply. "Alice said you were going away to-morrow."

"And you were sorry?"

"I couldn't help it," whispered Molly; "you have been so kind to me, and I have so few friends."

"Molly," said Keith, suddenly, "do you know what brought me into the grounds this afternoon?"

Molly shook her head.

"I wanted to find you."

"To say good-bye?"

"To ask you a question; to tell you something that has been in my thoughts for days, only I was so afraid of frightening you I put it off."

"And now I have heard it from someone else I wish you had told me, Mr. Durant. When Alice said it seemed so sudden!"

"Said what?"

"That you were going away."

"What else did she say?"

"Your grandfather had gone to London for the season, and wanted you. Alice does not think you will ever come back to the Towers."

"She is right there," said Keith Durant, slowly. "If a fear that troubles me is true it will be years before I come back to Lewis Allonby's house; but, Molly, that does not mean I shall not come back to you. There are plenty of hotels in Netherton where I can stay if only you will give me the answer to my question that I long for."

No suspicion of his meaning came to Molly. She said, quietly—

"I don't think I shall be in Netherton much longer either. If only Uncle John will let me I mean to go away."

"Will you come to me, Molly?"

"I couldn't," said Molly, simply. "You would not have any situation for me."

"Molly, what a child you are! Don't you know the question I want to ask you? Darling, it is this. I love you better than the whole world. I want you to put your little hand in mine and promise to be my wife?"

"Me!" exclaimed Molly; "but I never dreamed of such a thing as being married!"

"But I have dreamed of marrying you, dear, almost ever since that afternoon in the wood when I met you and you gave me a violet. I have that flower now, Molly, and I shall never part with it while I live."

"But I am only a burden to every one connected with me," protested Molly. "Aunt Susan has told me so again and again."

"Nevertheless, I ask nothing better than to have the task of cherishing that burden forever. Molly, darling, won't you believe me?"

"It is so strange!"

"Sweetheart, it would be stranger if I did not love you, for you have a face to take a man's heart by storm. I should have told you so before only I did not dare. You were such a child, and I had so little to offer you."

"You have love," whispered Molly, "and that is best of all!"

"I hope you will always think so, dear. But, Molly, do you know I am a poor man?"

Molly's eyes did not seem one whit shadowed by this announcement. Durant pressed the little hand he held to his lips, and went on.

"It is quite true, dear! I am a poor man in two senses. I have no profession and I belong to a family used to keep up a great deal of show. I have led an idle, aimless life my darling! While my grandfather lived I knew a luxurious house was ever open to me, and so I never troubled to be independent; but all that shall be managed now. I will take the first post I can get, and work as I never worked before for my darling, if only you will give me a hope, Molly, that this little hand shall be my reward!"

Molly looked into his eyes.

"I love you," she whispered; "I never knew it till now, but I love you just as you do me."

He put his arm round her and kissed her. The world seemed very bright to Molly. She was a little waif no longer. She had someone to care for her now, and to stand between her and all sorrow.

"You are quite sure!" pleaded the girlish voice. "Oh! Mr. Durant, if you grew tired of me and I felt your love and left me it would break my heart!"

"I am quite sure, darling, I shall never love anyone in the world as I do my brown-eyed Molly. I only wish I could go to Mr. Cameron now, and ask him for his treasure."

Molly gravely, "Uncle John will think you mad!"

"Never mind what he thinks. Molly, I should like to go to him this moment; but for the sake of the future, for both our interests, I think none must know of our love until I have spoken to my grandfather."

"Lord Ogilvie!"

"Yes. How scared you look, dear! Surely, Molly, you are not afraid of him?"

"He will not like you to marry me!"

It was so entirely the truth that Keith was at a loss to answer. He would not admit she was right. He could not tell a lie, and say the Earl would be pleased at their engagement.

"He must learn to love you when he sees you," said Keith, warmly, "and, Molly, he has been so good to me. All these years he has been the kindest and best of fathers to me. For my sake, sweetheart, you will try to like him?"

Molly promised.

"And, dear, in a very little while, a week at the longest, I hope to be back in Netherton, and able to plead my cause with your uncle. You can trust me till then, can't you, little Molly?"

"I can trust you for ever!"

Keith stroked her hair caressingly.

"Before another Christmas I hope we shall be together for all time. Molly, you must carry a bunch of violets when we are married. They are just like you. I shall never smell the perfume of sweet violets now without thinking of Miss Molly."

The girl clung to him with a little cry.

"Mr. Durant, do you think your mother will like me?"

"Not Mr. Durant, Molly! I must be Keith to you now and henceforward."

"Keith then!"

Never had his name sounded so sweet to him before. He bent and kissed her.

"What were you asking me, Molly?"

"Will your mother like me?"

"She won't be able to help it even if she tries."

But Molly knew from the very tone of his voice he believed Lady Alice would make the effort he had declared would be a failure.

It was getting dark when the two reluctantly turned their faces homewards.

"Keith!" said Molly, half timidly, "I do so wish I might tell Mrs. Allonby. She has been so good to me, it seems ungrateful not to let her know of my happiness."

"You must tell no one until I have spoken to your uncle, Molly, and Mrs. Allonby, or Lewis least of all."

"I thought they were your best friends?"

"So they are. Do not let the delay trouble you, little girl. In a week's time all the world shall know that I have won Miss Molly."

Molly hesitated.

"And you will tell me if you change your mind?"

Keith started.

"Dear, what makes you think me fickle? I don't ask you to be so careful."

"But it is so different."

"I don't see it."

"You have noble relations, who think a great deal of you," persisted Molly. "You have as you said just now, a luxurious home. Now, it seems to me, they may all turn against you, the Earl, your mother, and the rest, when they hear you are going to marry a poor little waif, whom no one cares for. If you have to choose between them and me, it may seem a sacrifice to be true to Molly!"

Mr. Durant smiled.

"Well, in a week's time I shall have dispelled your doubts forever. If I am not here in a week Molly, you will be able to think me as base as you please. But I shall be here, even if I have to walk every step of the way!"

"And you will find me waiting."

He smiled.

"Ah, Molly, don't you think it's my turn to be sceptical now? What if you find those brown eyes might win the heart of a far better man? What if, instead of a careless fellow with four hundred a year, a county magnate, with more thousands than he could spend, came to woo my Molly?"

"It would be no use!" said Molly, firmly. "You know I belong to you, Keith, and I shall never change!"

* * * * * *

"It is high time they were married."

The scene was a small library in a stately Belgravian mansion. An old gentleman sat at the carved table, apparently lost in thought, his companion a stately and still beautiful woman, who looked less than her real age, which was among the forties.

She was talking with great animation, her face lighted up by her eagerness, but she failed to awaken the least excitement in her father.

Possibly, at seventy-two, Lord Ogilvie took all things more tranquilly than Lady Alice Durant.

He was a very striking-looking man, but his face was shadowed by a great sadness.

One of the wealthiest nobles of the day, of great intelligence, and eagerly courted by statesmen for his political talents, popular with his equals, adored by his tenants and servants, it seemed passing strange that Lord Ogilvie never gave you the impression of being a happy man.

Of course he had great domestic sorrows. He lost his wife when he was only thirty-five, and thus had had to live more than half his life without her.

Of the six fair children she bequeathed him five had already followed her into the silent land. Three died unmarried. A fourth offended his father by refusing the wife selected for him, became an alien from home, and only re-entered his father's house to die.

The other two of the flock were daughters, and both married early men with every desirable quality save fortune. Both were widowed young, returned to make the sunshine of their father's desolate home.

Beatrice Hurst soon followed her husband. She declared she had loved him too well to live without him.

Her sister remained Lady Chatelaine, of Ogilvie Castle and the Belgravian mansion, companion and secretary of the Earl, mother and guardian of the two children, Sybil Hurst and Keith Durant!

Lady Alice was intensely proud. She had married for love; but this seemed the one weakness of her life.

After her husband's death she gave herself over to ambition. To bring up her boy to be rich and great was her one aim.

To her mind it was a cruel wrong that, since Beatrice had been a year her senior, her father's great wealth and broad lands must pass to Sybil Hurst instead of to Keith Durant.

The entail was so strict that save the title—which went to a distant cousin—everything must be Sybil's.

The Earl, of course, could dispose as he pleased of his savings, but they would not satisfy Lady Alice's ambition.

Therefore, before Sybil left off pinafores, her aunt had followed the brilliant idea of a marriage between the cousins.

How she labored for this end no one would believe. It seemed to her the most natural arrangement. There were four years between the pair.

They were, of course, well acquainted, but had never been allowed to grow fraternal in their intercourse.

Nothing had been said publicly of the scheme, and yet the two young people knew pefectly what was expected of them, and all Lady Alice's intimates looked on them as engaged.

It was this which Mrs. Allonby had had in her thoughts when she told her son she would not have invited Alice Cameron had she been very fascinating, since it was not fair to Keith to expose him to dangers of that sort.

The mistress of the Towers regarded the match as a settled thing.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

FULL OF RESOURCES.—A German dramatic author tells a good story of an improvised monologue to which he had to listen not long ago on the occasion of the first production of a new comedy.

The hero had finished a tolerably long piece of solitary declamation, and at that precise moment a medical man ought to have emerged from the wings. But he didn't emerge.

"Ah! there comes the doctor," began the hero afresh, in order to fill up the time; and he anxiously stared in the direction of the prompt side of the stage. "But how slowly he walks! One would imagine that there was no need for hurry! Now he has positively stopped to talk to a lady. What can he have to say to her? At last he is once more on his way. No! now he has stopped to talk to a man. Why, the doctor knows every one! Here he comes again. Thank Heaven!"

At that moment the doctor entered, but from the "opposite prompt" side. For an instant the hero was a little taken aback, but with admirable coolness he recovered himself, and, as he greeted his visitor, exclaimed, "How did you get round the corner so quickly, doctor?" Not every actor is equally full of resources.

HERE is a marriage arrangement a little out of the common. Miss Susan B. Warren, of Boston, was married last September. She passed a honeymoon with her husband and then returned to her mother's house, while the young bridegroom, Mr. John R. C. Wrenshall, of Baltimore, returned to college to continue his studies for two years longer.

NO SIN.

BY WM. W. LONG.

There lies within my heart a dream of bliss,
To place upon your mouth one perfect kiss.
Dare you, fair lily of my life, deny me this?

Is there one thought of mine can draw you down to me?
One thought to make you know, and feel, and see
The love that while this life goes on must ever be?

Your gentle heart, your holy eyes, your lips, are all my shrine;
Fair face, warm lips, oh! once bend down to mine;
There is no sin, twin souls are mine and thine!

THE DEAD HAND.

BY T. L. T.

CHAPTER I.

THIRTY years ago the Riviera was a quiet district in which Nice only received any large number of winter visitors.

The many huge hotels which now accommodate their hundreds were undreamt of; the small towns nestled under hillsides above the sea in undisturbed Italian repose.

There were indeed many pretty villas among the olive groves and the vines stretching from pillar to pillar, but the foreigners who hired these villas had to be content with the simple life of past ages, with postal deliveries twice a week at most, and none of the appliances of civilization in its modern sense.

Such villas were therefore not occupied by invalids who required English doctors and chemists.

If hired at all, they were taken by persons in comparatively good health, who wished to exchange the cold winds and fogs of London, Paris, or St Petersburg for the sunny skies of the Riviera, not to cure disease, but to avoid it, or simply to enjoy sunshine instead of gloom; warmth instead of cold.

In one of these villas, within a mile of a small town, then Italian, I was spending a winter, partly to keep company with a college friend whose health demanded a warm winter climate, and partly to read hard for an examination necessary to enter the career on which I had decided.

It was the second winter that my friend's family had occupied the same villa, so that we had become well known to all the local people, and were considered quite old residents.

Next to us, separated only by a small garden planted with orange-trees, and by one of those [illegible] walls which so sadly disfigure the Riviera, was another villa that had long been vacant.

Its situation was excellent, its rooms numerous and spacious; but the demand for such houses was at the time very limited, and the proprietor was understood to be a widow in moderate circumstances who lived with her daughter, married to a small tradesman, at Turin.

But shortly after our arrival this second winter the persiennes were thrown open one fine morning, and country carts, heavily laden, toiled up the steep lane to the villa.

People were busy cleaning and furnishing, under the directions of an elderly man, evidently the upper servant of the new occupier's.

I soon ascertained that the place had been taken by a very rich Englishman (at that period the Riviera folks still believed every Englishman to be very rich).

A few days days later a vetturino drove his four horses and his heavy carriage up the same lane, and the Englishman entered the villa.

It was of course our duty to call on the new-comer, and had it not been duty it would have been our pleasure, for we had but few associates, and a little variety was pleasant to anticipate; but my friend, who was the first to call, brought into my study no very encouraging report of our neighbor. He was, it appears, moody and silent, though perfectly courteous.

It was not likely that he would prove any great acquisition to our limited circle.

My friend advised me to try whether I could succeed in making a more favorable impression than he himself had done, and I was willing to make the attempt, so on the next day I rang the ponderous bell, of which the clang re-echoed many times through the great rooms of the villa.

The door was opened by the same elderly servant who had superintended the arrival of the various goods and chattels; but he was now dressed in black, like a family butler, and the quiet solemnity of his manner was very different to the restlessness he had displayed in his preparations for his master.

Solemnly he took my card, solemnly led me into a large, scantily-furnished anteroom, and solemnly motioned me to a seat.

Then he went to inquire whether his master would receive me.

I was soon ushered into a brighter room, facing the south, handsomely furnished in a style which was then uncommon, though it has since become very usual.

The floor was covered with finely-woven Japanese matting, on which several Persian rugs were scattered.

There were low sofas and ottomans, cane-bottomed rocking-chairs, and tiny lacquered tables.

From an armchair near the window rose a handsome man of middle-age, perhaps even not older than thirty.

But the gravity of his demeanor, his hollow cheeks, and the deep lines round his forehead and mouth, made him look older.

He bowed, and motioned me to a seat, but appeared not to notice my outstretched hand.

He left it me to open the conversation, which I did by bidding him welcome to St. Agostino, and expressing a hope that we should often see him at our villa. He shook his head.

"I have come here," he said, "for absolute quiet and seclusion. You are very kind as was your friend who called here yesterday, but I am not a society man."

I then inquired whether his health made absolute retirement necessary. He smiled in a melancholy way.

"Yes—yes," he answered. "Perhaps it is my health;" but vouchsafed no further explanation.

It was quite evident that Sir Percy Danvers (for that was the new-comer's name) was not at all disposed to be friendly.

He asked no questions about the neighborhood, and appeared to take no interest in the information I volunteered in order not to be altogether silent.

In short, my visit appeared likely to be as complete a failure as that of my friend. Looking about the room in a vacant way while trying to discover a new subject, my eye fell on a trophy of various weapons on the wall opposite the big fireplace.

There were yataghans and Burmese dahs and Mogul tulwars, there were also Cossack lances and Zulu assegais, not then such everyday objects as they are now.

"You have traveled?" I said, interrogatively. "You have there a fine collection of arms."

My host answered, with a shade of interest—

"Yes, I have been in many parts of the world. But most of those things come from Constantinople, where people from all countries congregated during the Crimean War."

"Were you in the war?" I asked, with genuine interest, for the Crimean War was the one absorbing topic of interest during my freshman's year at Oxbridge. Sir Percy only bowed. I stood up to look at the weapons more closely. "This," I remarked, pointing to a finely-inlaid sword, "surely does not come from the Crimea?"

"No," he answered; "it is an Indian sword."

"Were you in the Mutiny also?" I asked, with still greater interest, for the Mutiny had only been recently quelled, and England was still mourning the fate of some of her noblest sons and fairest daughters.

Again a silent bow was the response, and my further questions only elicited monosyllables.

Sir Percy was evidently anxious that I should go. His tall figure was half-turned towards the door, as if ready to bow me out, and at last I was obliged to take the tacit hint.

As I murmured some words of polite leave-taking, I noticed a very curious thing, which formed the centre of the trophy.

It was like the foot of a very large bird, or, rather, as one claw was very much shorter and thicker than the rest, like a human hand with very long fingers, and very little palm.

The fingers, or talons, were slightly curved, and the hand, or bird's-claw, was nailed flat against the wall.

It was a strange-looking object, but one which it was too late to discuss to-day. "A subject for next time," I thought, as the ponderous door of the villa was opened for me by the silent servant.

Shortly afterwards the latter brought over a sheaf of his master's cards, with the brief remark (addressed to our Gianetta) that Sir Percy paid no visits.

He was not a conversational man, and even the servant's gossip told us nothing except that he, and an elderly woman who came in the morning and went home again at night, were the only attendants Sir Percy kept.

We could see his head as he walked for hours slowly up and down his sunny terrace; but he was always alone, and he never seemed to leave his own grounds except for an occasional stroll in the mountains, with his gun on his shoulder.

Probably I should never have had the chance of meeting him again had I not myself made the opportunity by also strolling out, with a gun on my shoulder, towards the mountains.

I must confess to some unwarrantable curiosity, for, after all, Sir Percy's silence and retired habits were no affair of mine, nor had I any right to disturb them. But I felt sure that the man had a history.

The lines on his face, his dislike to society, his melancholy, his reticence, and the objects with which he had surrounded himself, all testified to something unusual, if not romantic, in his past life.

Young as I was then, and somewhat imaginative, I was burning to know what that something was, and I made all sorts of fanciful conjectures, which only made me the more anxious to discover the true facts.

CHAPTER II.

MANY a fruitless walk up the mountain sides I had. Fruitless, at any rate, as far as my chief object was concerned, though on these walks I discovered beauties of Nature which I had never suspected.

The southern slopes of the Apennines, above the level of olive and orange, are not so bare as they appear from the distance.

There is many a wooded valley a thousand feet or more above the sea, many a glen clad with birch and pine—the former bare and silvery, the latter deeply green against the blue sky.

Of game I shot but little, and my long walks scarcely conduced to hard reading, as I was too sleepy to do much work when I returned home.

So I soon began to think that it would be wiser to stick to my books than to seek to fathom a mystery by scrambling up and down rocky hillsides and jumping from crag to crag.

The day after Christmas should, I determined, be the last one I would waste. Strange to say, on this day I started with no thought of the object which had first prompted me.

It was gloriously fine, though the air was cold, and shouldered my gun with the sole intention of ascending and reaching one of the highest rocky peaks within reach—a peak which was said to be the haunt of the great Alpine eagle, the Lammergeier, of which even then but few were left so far south.

It was a long and stiff walk, and the sun had already long passed its meridian when I had fringed the little glacier at the foot of the peak, and had but a few hundred feet to climb to gain the desired summit.

I looked up, and for a moment thought that I could make out the figure of a man leaning against the bare rock in deep shadow.

But then I thought I must be mistaken, as no sportsmen found their way so far up in the depth of winter to these icy solitudes, where there was no bird, except the fierce eagle.

For him I looked round eagerly, scanning the sky and the mountains. Seeing nothing living, I turned to ascend.

When about half-way—within a very few minutes of the summit—I was startled by the sound of a shot, which re-echoed loudly from the crag.

Instinctively I sought to secure a foothold, and cocked my gun. The shot was quickly followed by the second barrel, and then, from close beside me, a great bird flew up, apparently unharmed, and soared rapidly upwards.

But not so rapidly as the shot I sent after him. Thrice he fell over in the air, then flew again, and I quickly fired my second barrel.

I heard the loud thud with which the eagle fell on the stony edge of the glacier, far beneath; but I could not see him, so strove to reach the summit, whence I could obtain a better view.

As I drew my body up the last ledge, which required the use of both hands and feet, I saw our neighbor standing there, reloading his gun. At last!

"Good day, Sir Percy," I said.

"That was a good shot," he said, with a nod. I have 'marked' your bird for you."

"Thanks, indeed. I should be sorry to lose him."

"There he is," continued he, pointing to the edge of the glacier, and offering me his field-glass, an article I had not brought with me.

No doubt the dead eagle was there, but it would not be quite easy to get him. Without the field-glass, I should never have been able to discover where he fell.

Sir Percy was far more sympathising on these Alpine heights than in his own villa, for after I had taken breath and enjoyed the view for a few minutes, he volunteered to help in retrieving the bird, while reminding me that the short afternoon was wearing on space.

Without his help I could not have recovered the booty, as I should certainly have lost the bearings of the spot in the descent.

But by keeping a certain distance between each other and correcting our course, we were able to find the magnificent, but cruel-looking bird—cruel even in death, his hooked beak and powerful talons tightly closed in their last struggle.

Of course I wished to take him home and get him stuffed as a trophy, and here again Sir Percy volunteered his help.

For one alone he would have been a heavy load, in addition to gun and cartridges, but my neighbor volunteered to carry my gun and ammunition, leaving me quite free to deal with the eagle; and when we reached easier ground, we slung him over the two fowling-pieces and carried him between us.

Sir Percy was still by no means communicative, but he was less reticent.

On our long walk home he told me some of his hunting and shooting adventures in various countries, and though evidently determined not to speak of himself more than he could help, I could not fail to gather from what he left unsaid that my companion was a man of no ordinary hardihood and strength.

He showed no jealousy of my having succeeded in shooting the eagle, which he had missed owing to his footing having been insecure.

He smilingly said that he had tried on three different occasions to get a shot at this king of birds, but had always failed.

As we neared the village, Sir Percy relapsed into silence, and left me at my own door with a slight nod before I could press him to enter.

Looking at my victim next morning, a curious thought struck me. There was a distinct resemblance between the huge claws of the Lammergeier and the strange talons fastened to the wall of Sir Percy's drawing-room.

The resemblance was not so much in the general shape—for the eagle's feet had neither palm nor thumb—as in the strength and cruelty expressed in the lines and curve of each horrid claw.

This thought made me hesitate for a moment about taking the bird to Nice to be stuffed.

I had no fixed home; my friend's family were wanderers for the sake of their son's health. I had no place to exhibit such a monster.

Perhaps Sir Percy might accept the eagle. I at once acted on the idea, and dragging the bird across the way, asked to be admitted.

There seemed to be some reluctance on the part of Sir Percy to receive me, but I was at last shown in, and briefly explained my errand. He refused to accept the offer, although he acknowledged it very courteously.

"It is more your bird than mine, Sir Percy," I urged. "If you had not first fired at it, I should not have been ready. Besides, you had been three long days after him."

Still he refused to deprive me of the trophy, but his manner was gentler than before.

He was evidently touched by what he considered the generosity of a young sports man. At last I turned to the wall and the mysterious talons.

"The claws of the Lammergeier," I said, "would well match the strange talons you have there. What bird is it? Or is it the foot of a wild beast?"

I never saw a man's face change so rapidly and terribly as did Sir Percy's. His mouth, which had before been half-open in a gentle smile, closed so tightly that he appeared to have no lips.

His eyes, generally languid and partly closed, opened wide in a fixed stare. The muscles of his face grew stark and rigid.

I saw I had offended him in some way, and was almost terrified by his look. I turned away and examined the curious talons, in order to cover my confusion. They seemed to grow in length and cruel curves as I looked, and to be stretching out seeking for a prey to grasp and pierce.

"That is not the spoil of a bird," said Sir Percy, hoarsely. "That is the hand of a man—of a beast, rather. Aye," he added, in a deep whisper, "if you could bring me the fellow to it, I would indeed accept it with joy. I have cut that right hand off, and nailed it safely there, but who can tell what horror the left hand may still commit?"

Then I recognised the awful thing. A human hand, a very large one; the flesh shrunk on the bones, and the skin on the flesh; withered and black.

But there were still the finger-nails, the projecting knuckles, a horrible caricature of what must have been a cruel hand in life.

I turned to ask more questions. But Sir Percy, livid and speechless, opened the door, and by an imperious gesture bade me go.

CHAPTER III.

MY curiosity had been violently aroused, but there was no possibility of satisfying it. Sir Percy sent a polite message to say that he was indisposed when I next called, and neither I nor any of my friends saw any more of him than the top of his large sombrero hat as he walked up and down his terrace.

But we were all extremely puzzled, some of us horrified. The man whose hand Sir Percy had cut off was evidently still living, and in his opinion still dangerous. Why did he cut off his hand? Whose hand was it?

How did it all happen? Such and similar questions preyed on my mind, and often robbed me of my sleep.

I spent many wakeful hours in planning ingenious methods for discovering the secret, and often I woke with a start from a short slumber with the awful feeling that the dried-up bird-like talons were grasping my neck and choking me.

One morning, about a fortnight after our shooting expedition, there appeared to be some commotion next door.

The woman who came daily to do the housework was seen rushing down the lane as fast as her old legs would carry her.

Then appeared two gendarmes, and a few minutes later we heard—of course through the servants—that our neighbor, Sir Percy Danvers, had suddenly died in the night. Murdered, they said—undoubtedly murdered.

There was no inquest in Italy, but there was an inquiry by the Commissary of Police, and of course I attended it.

It appeared that, when the old servant went as usual to awake his master in the morning and take him a cup of chocolate, he had found him dead in his bed. He at once raised an alarm.

The old woman, who had thrown open the persiennes of the sitting-room long before, had neither heard nor seen anything.

None of the windows nor doors showed signs of having been broken open. They had all been securely barred by the old valet at ten the previous evening.

Sir Percy, he said, was very particular about this, and walked through all the rooms nightly to be sure that everything was closed and locked.

The valet kept the key of the kitchen door only. This he opened as usual about seven o'clock in the morning to let the old woman in.

At that time neither of them suspected that anything unusual had occurred. Not until two hours later did the valet discover that an awful crime had been committed—

a crime undoubtedly—for, although Sir Percy's bedroom showed no traces of a struggle, he had died by strangulation. The doctor, who was of course summoned, had no doubt whatever on this subject; and the Nice surgeon, who arrived in the course of the day, concurred with him.

The victim had been, in fact, garrotted; but the fashion of his death was as horrible as it was mysterious.

No rope had been used. But there were five deep channels in his throat, each of which ended in a ghastly puncture.

"It looks," said one medical man, with a half smile, "as if a skeleton hand had clutched his throat. I know no rope, chain, or other instrument which would produce these five bruises and the five punctures."

Under the dead man's pillow were found a loaded revolver and a large bunch of keys.

Both, said the valet, were invariably placed under the pillow by Sir Percy himself. He had often seen him do it before undressing.

The keys were those of the outer doors of the villa and of the front gate. They were handed to his master when all was locked up, and Sir Percy handed them back again in the morning.

The only key given to the servants was that of the kitchen, and no one could pass from the kitchen into the house without passing through his (the valet's) room. In fact, by Sir Percy's orders, the servant's bed was always drawn across the door at night.

It was pretty evident, then, that Sir Percy Danvers was afraid of someone breaking into the house.

Murders—except as the result of a jealous quarrel after a festa—were unheard of on the Riviera, and no burglary had been committed within the memory of living man.

People were very careless about locking up their houses, though most of the ground floor windows were guarded with iron bars.

As a matter of course, the police at once arrested both the valet and the old woman. The former was in such deep grief that he did not seem to be much affected by this further misfortune; the latter yelled and screamed as only an old Italian or crazy woman can.

The evidence of both being considered tainted, the Commissary asked whether anyone else could be found who knew the murdered man, and I volunteered to state the very little I did know.

I could give no information as to any valuables which Sir Percy might have been in the habit of keeping in the villa; but as a handsome gold watch and chain were found on the table by the bedside, and a considerable sum in notes in a pocket book on the mantelpiece, robbery did not appear to have been the murderer's motive.

I was then asked to walk through the rooms and to see whether any change had occurred since my last visit.

Twice I scanned the ante-room, the staircase, and the sitting-room carefully, and noticed no difference. But the third time I walked towards the trophy.

"The hand has gone," I exclaimed; and, in answer to a question of the Commissary, described what had occurred on the day I shot the eagle.

Undoubtedly the hand had disappeared from the wall.

And when I fetched my eagle, now stuffed, and described the huge claws which had been nailed up under the lances and assegais, comparing them to the fearful talons of the Lammergeier, a shudder ran through the doctors and the Commissary, accustomed as they must have been to various horrors.

For undoubtedly the dead hand might have inflicted those wounds had it been living. One of the surgeons said so. But his colleague asked me what hand I had seen.

"The right," I replied.

Then he summoned the other surgeon and the Commissary into the dead man's room, and throwing back the sheet which covered the livid face, exclaimed—

"See! If a hand inflicted these wounds—which appears to me almost impossible—it must have been a right hand. But that right hand can scarcely have been a human one. It must have been of bronze or steel to throttle him thus."

A careful investigation of the gardens was then made, and at last two footprints were discovered under one window of the large sitting-room, which communicated with Sir Percy's bedroom.

They were very long and narrow footprints, totally unlike those that would have been made by the bare or booted feet of the valet, and still more unlike the short footmarks of the old woman.

A few faint traces were found between the window and the back entrance, but very faint, and it was clear that the murderer had jumped from the window on to the gravel path beneath, and had made deep marks, as the height was considerable.

The theory which at once occurred to me—and possibly also to the Commissary—was, that the murderer had, after committing the crime, concealed himself in the sitting-room, and had jumped out of the window as soon as old Marzia had opened it, and escaped while she was busy elsewhere.

The valet was positive that the door into the bedroom was always locked by his master, who always rose from his bed to open it; but it had been found unlocked and it was abundantly clear that any master-key would have sufficed to open so primitive a lock.

But how did the murderer get in? The only reply to this question was that he might have done so at almost any time during the day, while Sir Percy was out and the servant, perhaps, taking a siesta, and that he must have hidden himself somewhere in the house till the time came for accomplishing his fell purpose.

The valet had been only a year in Sir Percy's service, having been engaged as courier and general servant at the chief Italian agency in London.

He knew nothing of his master's history, except that he had at that time just returned from India.

He stated that Sir Percy was always very quiet, and received no one, either in Germany, where they had spent the previous summer, or in Italy.

The person who had acted for the Turin widow was also summoned, but neither from them nor from the house-agent, nor from Sir Percy's bankers in England; could any information be obtained which could by any means elucidate the mystery.

After a month's detention, the two servants were released; but meanwhile two other strange events had occurred.

Sir Percy was buried in a special corner of the picturesque little cemetery of St. Agostino, and the grave was closed over him.

Next day the gravedigger found on the grave a fearful-looking object, which he dared not touch, but running away affrighted, he summoned the police.

I was startled from my books by the appearance of a gendarme, and hurried off to the cemetery, where I found a crowd round the freshly-closed grave.

"Look at that, Signor," said the Commissary of Police. "Do you recognize it?"

It was the hand—the dead hand—which I had seen nailed to the wall of the villa. How did it come there? Who had brought it?

The other strange event occurred after the arrival from London of the lawyer charged by Sir Percy's heir (a distant cousin) to wind up his affairs and dispose of the lease of the villa.

This gentleman appeared to be a thoroughly practical business man, and certainly the last one to be affected by fanciful fears. He was anxious to get back quickly to London, and the slow delays of Italian formalities vexed him.

To expedite matters, and as there was then no decent hotel in St. Agostino, he took up his quarters in the late Sir Percy's villa. He was good enough to dine with us. On the second evening, after his first night in the villa, he asked me whether there were any very large spiders or beetles in the country?

"Nothing at this time of year," I replied. "Only a few common house spiders."

"Nothing large enough," he asked, "to make a loud rustling noise in running over curtains or furniture?"

"Certainly not," I said. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing," he answered, looking thoughtful.

Two days later, to our surprise, he sent a note to say that he would accept our previously refused offer of a bedroom, and during the rest of his stay he stopped with us. He thought it necessary to explain why he had changed his mind.

"On the first night," he said, "I was disturbed by frequent noises, like the crawling of a huge beetle or spider over the bedclothes and up the curtains. You said there were no such creatures in the place, so last night I kept a lamp burning to find out what the noises were. I went off to sleep all right, but woke about midnight and heard the noise again. I looked all about, and saw a great black hand or claw moving across the bed towards me. It was terrible! And I had not had anything to drink, nor any supper to disagree with me. It must have been the horrible story of poor Sir Percy's death that affected my nerves. I tried to seize it, but then it ran up the curtains; and, when I shook them, it came down to the bed again. I did not get to sleep till the first dawn of daylight. But I'm not a nervous man, and I don't believe in ghosts; so I determined to try another night, and I moved my bed into the old sitting-room. Why, there it was, worse than ever. The fearful thing darted out at me from the middle of the wall, just under the trophy of arms, and then back again; then all round the room, and over the sofa, and then on to my bed again, always returning to the place on the wall."

"But it is not there now," I observed. "It is at the Commissary's house, carefully locked up as a piece de conviction."

"Yes, I know it is. It was not on the wall when daylight came, and I've seen it at the Commissary's since. But that villa does not agree with me. No doubt it's all my fancy, but I cannot sleep there."

I did not spend the next winter at St. Agostino, but I drove over there once to inquire whether anything had been discovered relating to the crime.

Nothing. But some English people had hired Sir Percy's villa, and had left it after a week.

They gave no reason, but their servants said that dead hands were crawling over the beds at night, and clutching at their throats. And then the villa was offered for a mere song to some Russians.

They only remained in it two nights, and then rushed away, half dead with fright, the ladies hysterical, and the children pale.

A hand had been seen and heard, first by one and then by the other, and the hand had crawled up to those who were not asleep, and laid a cold grasp on their necks, while those who slept started up suddenly, half suffocated, and saw a fearful black hand running up the curtains, and heard it rustling.

After this the villa remained unoccupied. I believe that it is now pulled down. At any rate, no one has been found courageous enough to brave the dead hand.

WIT IN THE PULPIT.

ALTHOUGH an extreme gravity of demeanor is generally considered essential to the proper conduct of religious services, numberless examples are on record in which the occupant of a pulpit has thought it not inconsistent with his position to indulge in outbursts of wits, or to give free rein to his sense of humor. In some instances, of course, this has been deliberate, for the purpose of more thoroughly engaging the attention of the congregation; but the effects have been, occasionally, somewhat startling.

Such was doubtless the case when Rowland Hill one day commenced a sermon by shouting, "Matches! matches! matches!"

His hearers naturally looked at him in astonishment, accustomed though they were to his peculiarities.

"You wonder," he went on to say, "at my text, but this morning, while I was engaged in my study, the demon whispered to me, 'Ah, Rowland, your zeal is indeed noble, and how indefatigably you labor for the salvation of souls!' At that very moment a poor man passed under my window crying, 'Matches!' very lustily; and conscience said to me, 'Rowland, Rowland! you never labored to save souls with half the zeal that this man does to sell his matches!'"

Sydney Smith was once preaching to a congregation made up almost exclusively of ladies.

He chose for his text the words, "Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord," laying special stress on the word men, and looking significantly round the church.

The Rev. Dr. Howard, chaplain to Princess Augusta, was so fond of good living that he ran considerably into debt with many of the tradesmen in the parish. It was in their special interests that he one day preached from the text, "Have patience and I will pay you all." He spoke at great length on the virtues of patience, and then proceeded, "I now come to the second part of my discourse, which is, 'And I will pay you all;' but that I shall defer to a future occasion."

It is not often, perhaps, that a preacher is placed in the position of the Rev. Patrick Stewart, who, on spreading out the manuscript of his sermon before him in the pulpit, found that the first page or two had been eaten away. "My brethren," he said, nothing disconcerted, "I find that the mice have made free with the beginning of my sermon, so that I cannot tell you where the text is; but we'll just begin where the mice have left off, and we'll find out the text as we go along."

They were, however, more fortunate, the congregation, one Sunday, of the Rev. Mr. Alcock, who, when beginning his sermon, found that one of his friends, at whose house he had called on his way to church, had unstitched the sermon, and disarranged the pages. "Will, thou rascal!" said the reverend gentleman, turning towards the offender, "what's thou been doing with my sermon?" Then, addressing the congregation, he added, "Brethren, Will Thornton's been misplacing the leaves of my sermon. I have not time to put them right, and I shall read them on as I find them, and you must make the best of it that you can." He did so, but the congregation can hardly have derived much benefit from the discourse.

Decidedly caustic was the remark made by a clergyman who was stopped one Sunday by the loud talking that was going on among his congregation. A woman rose from the side of the church where those of her sex sat apart from the men, and called out—

"Your reverence, the talking is not among us."

"So much the better," answered the preacher; "it will be the sooner over!"

Dean Ramsay, too, tells of a northern minister who saw that a young man in the gallery, in taking out his pocket handkerchief, pulled out, at the same time, a pack of cards, which flew all about.

"Eh, mon," exclaimed the minister; "your psalm buik has been ill bund!"

A congregation which suddenly saw the preacher stop whilst he was enforcing a serious lesson, and burst out into a hearty fit of laughter, probably thought the reverend gentleman had become demented all at once.

But nothing worse had happened than a tickling of his sense of humor by an incident in the gallery.

He there saw two boys of whom one had the reddest of red hair, whilst the other was putting his fingers into it, and then hammering them, as though he was a blacksmith at work on red-hot iron just drawn from a blazing fire.

THE London St. James's Gazette, speaking of the American small boy, says: "He abounds in Paris, is common in Italy, and he is a drug in Switzerland. He is not only restless himself, but he is the cause of restlessness in others. He has no respect for the quiescent evening hour, devoted to cigarettes on the terrace after the table d'hote, and he is not to be overawed by a look! It is a constant source of great wonder to the thoughtfully inclined how the American man is evolved from the American boy. No one need desire a pleasanter traveling companion than the American man; it is impossible to imagine one more disagreeable than the American boy."

Scientific and Useful.

GLUE.—Dissolve isinglass in water, and strain through coarse linen, and then add a little spirits of wine. Evaporate it to such a consistency that when cold it will be dry and hard. This will hold stronger than common glue, and is much preferred.

CURE FOR EARACHE.—Take a bit of cotton batting, put upon it a pinch of black pepper, gather it up and tie it, dip it in sweet oil, and insert it in the ear. Put a flannel bandage over the head to keep it warm. It hardly ever fails to give immediate relief.

ELECTRIC-LIT SPECTACLES.—There has been invented a pair of spectacles for surgical examinations, lit by means of a small electric lamp, which sends a beam of cool light on the part to be examined. The rims of the spectacles are so formed as to exclude the outside light from the observer's eyes. The current is conveyed to the lamp by wires connected to the small terminals.

A MUSICAL SKIPPING-ROPE.—A novelty for children, in the form of a skipping-rope which plays tunes while it is being used, has been introduced. There is a small musical box fixed at the end of one of the handles of the rope, and the turning of the rope puts it at once in action. The idea is pretty and the price of the rope is said to be very moderate. It is to be hoped, however, that the box is not of a delicate constitution.

SOFT SOAP FOR BURNS.—A free application of soft soap to a fresh burn almost instantly removes the fire from the flesh. If the injury is very severe, as soon as the pain ceases apply linseed oil, and then dust over with fine flour. When this coating dries hard, repeat the oil and flour dressing until a good coating is obtained. When the latter dries, allow it to stand until it cracks and drops off, as it will do in a day or two, and a new skin will be found to have formed where the skin was burned.

BLACK VARNISH.—To make a good black varnish for iron-work take eight pounds of asphaltum and fuse it in an iron kettle, then add two gallons of boiled linseed oil, one pound of litharge, half pound sulphate of zinc (add these slowly or it will fume over), and boil them for about three hours. Then add one-and-a-half pounds of dark gum amber, and boil for two hours longer, or until the mass will become quite thick when cool. After this thin with turpentine to the proper consistency.

COPPER STEAM PIPES.—Steam pipes of copper are now made by electro deposition from sulphate of copper solution. The pipe is formed on an iron core in the depositing bath, and the deposited copper is pressed by a moving tool as it is deposited, so as to give a fibrous strength to the crystalline copper. After the pipe is thus formed it is subjected to hot steam, which expands the copper shell, or pipe, clears off the iron core, thus separating the two. These pipes have no joint, and are said to be very strong: tests showing that they break with strains of from twenty-seven to forty-one tons per square inch.

Farm and Garden.

SAWDUST.—Sawdust is one of the best protectors of the double-wall, cold storage-house. Asbestos is a better non-conductor, but sawdust absorbs and gives off the heat slowly, thereby enabling the dairyman or fruit-grower to regulate the temperature.

FARM MACHINERY.—Strange to say, many farmers do not take proper care of expensive machinery, and even allow some implements to remain in the fields. As farm machinery and implements are the most costly items of farming, quite a saving can be effected by keeping such under cover, and well cleaned and oiled.

HORTICULTURE.—One hundred years ago apples were not much larger than plums, tomatoes were entirely unknown, and many of the most valuable fruits and vegetables grew in the woods in the wild state in which nature created them. Horticulture has made wonderful strides, and is advancing every day.

HEDGE-FENCES.—As a rendezvous for skunks and rabbits the hedge-fence takes the lead, and when we consider the amount of labor necessary to keep such a fence in good condition and pleasing to the eye, we much prefer the barb-wire, although as a protection to stock in winter, the advantage is largely in favor of the hedge.

POULTRY.—The practice of marketing undrawn poultry should be abandoned, as the food in the crop and intestines is the first matter to decompose. When this happens the gases therefrom permeate the whole carcass. In some cities the heads and feet are removed, the intestines drawn out, and the interior of the carcass salted. The purchaser pays for no offal, and the quality of the carcass is shown by its condition and the inside fat.

WATER.—Prominent dairymen claim that by allowing the cows salt freely it produces a flow of milk. This is explained by the fact that salt promotes thirst, and causes the cow to drink more water. It is claimed that cows drinking less than twenty-seven quarts of water daily are poor milkers, water composing 86 per cent. of the milk. Such experiments, however, do not determine the quality of the milk, and in one respect shows that the milk may be watered through the agency of the cow.

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TO FRIENDS AND READERS.

We hope that those of our friends and readers who are kindly in the habit of getting up clubs for THE POST, will enter the field as soon as possible this year and try at least to double their old lists. We also hope our readers who have not heretofore sent us a club will try to do so now.

We wish to get a great many more clubs for the coming year, and trust every one of our present subscribers will make an extra effort to secure one or more new friends for us.

THE POST is much lower in price than any other first-class family paper in the country, and we think it only needs to be laid before the community to be subscribed for at once by thousands to whom it may still be a stranger, save, perhaps, by reputation. Of course we must depend in a great degree upon our present subscribers, friends and readers to show THE POST to their acquaintances and neighbors, and to speak a good word in our behalf. Their return for such efforts must be the pleasure they give to others, the consciousness of assisting in the good work of circulating THE POST, and enabling us to make it better, more useful and entertaining than ever before. Will they try and do it for us? Let each of our present friends and subscribers try to get one new subscriber at least.

Sample copies for the purpose will be sent to those who wish them.

The Heart of the Time.

Life at the present, even with the humblest and poorest—more particularly in our large cities and great centres of business—is passed with what we might call such locomotive, high-pressure speed, that nearly everything pertaining to existence is old almost before it is new. Like the inhabitants of that fabled land where childhood, youth, manhood and age were begun and ended in the brief space of twenty-four hours, we have so many objects of pursuit, attention, observation and practice, either in the line of work or pleasure, that, as children with excess of toys, we continually pass from one to the other; dropping a favorite, cherished a moment, for another, to be deserted in its turn, and so on to the end.

But if we are not constant in many things it is because it is impossible, perhaps, to remain so and keep up with the world's development. When we consider that in the year of grace that is now passing from us, more books are published in one city in a single twelve month than would occupy the longest life in reading alone, we can dimly begin to see the reason why—whether it be an evil or not—there is so much of change and unrest in modern customs, tastes and ideas.

Life in the nineteenth century is like a grand feast where all the best of all the ages is spread in luxuriant abundance. The most that the luckiest or best favored can do is to taste here and there, for a full meal is well-nigh impossible. What with adapting ourselves to the constantly improving rule of electric lights, telephones, lightning printing presses, multiplex telegraphs and the million and one inventions continually forcing themselves in, and others out of notice, the man whose ways and notions, date in some respects further back than yesterday, is hailed with mockery and laughter ten-fold worse than that which greeted Rip Van Winkle after his twenty years sleep.

Without, however, venturing an opinion as to the world being the better or worse for its crab or serpent like way of yearly, monthly, nay almost daily changing its garb and habits, it may be traced to what some would certainly call good influences or causes. The poorest daily laborer of to-day is so far the heir of all the improvement and progress earnestly working for the world's betterment, that he may enjoy more material comforts and conveniences than even royalty did, some centuries ago. And if this is true of those who from a worldly standpoint are not ranked among Fortune's favorites, what must be the happiness of those who as the chosen children of luck, have everything that the age offers for barter in the way of joy, comfort, or luxury at their easy command? Kings and queens and such like, of only a little while since, are hardly to be spoken of in the same breath.

And this comparison, coupled with the season, suggests another fact. While it is undoubtedly true, that we are exchanging forever old lamps for new ones—and sometimes it may be, profiting as little as did Aladdin by the traffic there is just as little doubt that what has come to Christmas and its celebration is all in the line of good. While of course the eternal truth underlying the spirit of the time can never know change, the general advance of the age in all that contributes to material happiness, has widened the sphere in which the Christmas spirit may work, in manifold lines of kindness and love.

The yet comparatively young man can remember the time when even some of the better off in this world's goods, had not the Christmas advantages that even the poorest may have now. It might be the heart was just as loving then; the head as willing to mark its appreciation of the season by kindly gift or little memento to the loved and honored, in the family circle or out of it, but the means were absent. The handmaids of industry, skill, study and genius held back the fullest measure of their gifts for a later day and, those now living are the fortunate recipients.

On every side the evidences of the season are multiplied and multiplying. And let us hope they may never grow less with its successors, but go on increasing until people learn to wear a Christmas heart and a Christmas hand the whole year round. And if that could be so, with all such a change would imply, we might see the world in every other trait and direction changing not yearly or monthly or daily, but for that matter every hour, and we could rest content, knowing that with the heart and spirit of christmas to govern it, all would be well.

HISTORY itself must now begin as from a new epoch. All the doing of the world, through this rapidity given to person and to thought, must be so altered as to bear no parallel with the past. The old living and communicating powers are defunct—they are as the water that has passed the mill. It must grind with that which succeeds.

SELFISHNESS, by its own law, not only moves in simple circles, but is short lived. What men do for themselves is soon expended, and is soon forgotten. Only that part of a man's life which includes other men's good, and especially the public good, is likely to be felt long after he himself is dead.

THE star I was born under tells me to look up. If we didn't come into this world to better ourselves, we might as well have stayed where we were.

WHEN we pray for any virtue, we should cultivate the virtue as well as pray for it; the form of your prayer should be the rule of your life; every petition to God is a precept to man. Look not, therefore, upon your prayers as a short method of duty; by what we require of God we see what He requires of us.

WHEN you have given over the practice of stated prayer, you gradually become weaker without knowing it. Samson did not know he had lost his strength till the Philistines came upon him; you will think yourselves the men you used to be, till suddenly your adversary will come furiously upon you, and you will as suddenly fall.

GIVE me the boy who rouses when he is praised, who profits when he is encouraged, and who cries when he is defeated. Such a boy will be fired by ambition; he will be stung by reproach, and animated by preference; never shall I apprehend any bad consequences from idleness in such a boy.

THE passions are at once tempters and chastisers. As tempters, they come with garlands of flowers on brows of youth; as chastisers, they appear with wreaths of snakes on the forehead of deformity. They are angels of light in their delusion; they are fiends of torment in their inflictions.

EMULATION is grief arising from seeing one's self exceeded or excelled by his concurrent, together with hope to equal or exceed him in time to come, by his own ability. But envy is the same grief joined with pleasure conceived in the imagination of some ill-fortune that may befall him.

ALL the passions of our animal nature are increased by indulgence. If they are improperly indulged, they will triumph in our ruin. They will obliterate those heaven-born qualities of our minds which, if properly cultivated, would assimilate us to angels and bring us home to God.

IT is proper that alms should come out of a little purse as well as out of a great sack; but surely where there is plenty, charity is a duty, not a courtesy; it is a tribute imposed by heaven upon us, and he is not a good subject who refuses to pay it.

CHILDREN should be inured as early as possible to acts of charity and mercy. Constantine, as soon as his son could write, employed his hand in writing pardons, and delighted in conveying through his mouth all the favors he granted.

HOURS have wings and fly up to the Author of Time, and carry news of our usage; all our prayers cannot entreat one of them to return or slacken his pace; the ill usage of every minute is a new record against us in heaven.

THE truly great and good in affliction bear a countenance more princely than they are wont; for it is the temper of the highest heart, like the palm tree, to strive most upward when it is most burdened.

IT may be remarked for the comfort of honest poverty, that avarice reigns most in those who have but few good qualities to recommend them. This is a weed that will only grow in a barren soil.

POWER, unless managed with gentleness and discretion, does but make a man the more hated. No intervals of good humor, no starts of bounty, will atone for tyranny and oppression.

PROSPERITY shines on different persons much in the same way that the sun shines on different objects. Some it hardens like mud, while others it softens like wax.

A gentle heart is like ripe fruit, which bends so low that it is at the mercy of every one who chooses to pluck it, while the harder fruit keeps out of reach.

ALL false practices and affectations of knowledge are more odious to God, and deserve to be so to men, than any want or defect of knowledge can be.

WE neglect the advantages we have, and think what we should do if we were something else than what we are.

The World's Happenings.

A Xenia, Ohio, man stole crape from the door of a friend.

Potatoes command but 15 cents a bushel in Southern Illinois.

Of the 101 counties of Kansas the Republicans carried 100.

Apples command but 10 cents a bushel in Atchison county, Kansas.

The secret orders throughout the United States are said to number 200.

The Indians of Oldtown Island, Maine, have organized a printing firm.

A cigar dealer in Manheim, Pa., has a rooster which can untie shoestrings.

Grand Rapids, Mich., policemen want the city to provide them with ear muffs.

A "ghost" which steals cotton has aroused the inhabitants of Monticello, Fla.

Mrs. Robert Owen, of Poultney, Vt., recently gave birth to 4 children—2 boys and 2 girls. All lived.

Richard Thomas, of Salem, Mass., boasts that he never rode in either a steam or horse car. He is 70 years old.

Emperor William, of Germany, has consented to stand as godfather to the ninth son of a poor workman of Marienburg.

A Nevada man raised a potato this season so large that when he sent it to a friend by mail he had to pay 30 cents postage on it.

The New York aldermen recently began to consider 600 applications for permits to keep fruit-stands in the streets of that city.

A farmer in Monterey county, Cal., is preparing to sow 10,000 acres with grain this winter. He is to use 40 eight-horse plows, it is said.

William Lyon, of Danbury, Conn., aged 75 years, was a few days ago wedded to Miss Cyrena Belcher, who recently attained her 15th year.

A California farmer, believing that cats will exterminate squirrels and gophers, purchased a large number and set them at liberty on his land.

The members of a facetious jury at Livingston, Mon., were each fined $5 by the judge for returning a verdict that "this jury do hereby agree to disagree."

The Emperor of Germany sleeps, as did his grandfather, on an iron camp-bed. He is subject to insomnia, and often walks his room nearly the entire night.

A Alabama negro rode on a railway train from Selma to Clayton recently. It was the first time he had ever taken such a ride, and the fright killed him.

Chicago Anarchists, it is said, have established six "Sunday-schools," in which they teach the young idea how to shoot and handle bombs and the like.

In the United States there are 1,371 dailies; 11,605 non-dailies, ranging from tri-weeklies to semi-monthlies, and 1,790 monthlies, bi-monthlies and quarterlies.

Investigation of the court records at Washington discloses the fact, it is said, that nearly nine-tenths of the crimes in the District of Columbia are committed by negroes.

A procession of the London cabs would stretch 45 miles. There is only public standing room for 23 miles of them. The other 22 miles have to go wandering about the streets.

Five hundred and twenty four cats have been on exhibition at the Crystal Palace. The most valuable cat was prized at about $10,000. He was a big, black-bellied cat, who had graced many exhibitions with his presence.

Burglars who were defeated in their attempt to rob a South Windham, Conn., store by the barking of a dog, killed the canine and then attached this message to its body: "Here is your dead dog. I wish you were dead, too!"

An inebriated fellow was drowned in a street gutter at Stockton, Cal. He fell to the sidewalk and then rolled off into the gutter, which contained about 4 inches of water. He was found a few moments later, but life was extinct.

The seating capacity of St Peter's Church, Rome, is 54,000; of Milan Cathedral, 32,000; St. Paul's, Rome, 25,000; St. Sophia's, Constantinople, 22,000; Notre Dame, Paris, 21,000; Florence Cathedral, 24,000; Pisa Cathedral, 13,000; St. Mark's, Venice, 7,000.

The eccentric bachelor of Ann Arbor, Mich., who three months ago was willed $200,000 on condition that he marry within five years, has since been flooded with proposals. They came from women, young and old, in nearly all parts of the country—including this city.

The "meanest man" in Kansas has been found. He lives in Reno county, and in writing to the Treasurer of Sedgwick county he used a postal card that had done duty once before, spending nearly 2 hours in effacing the old address, postmark and message. The postal is to be framed and hung in the Treasurer's office.

A "marriage trust" is the latest in combines. One of these baneful forganizations has been started in New Albany, Ind. It is intended to facilitate matrimony for eloping couples from Kentucky by providing the speediest ways of performing the wedding ceremony.

Members of a church at Adrian, Mich., have been supporting an old widow there for two years. The other day she went on a spree, when she boasted that she had been saving the money received from the church for that purpose. An investigation showed that she possessed $400.

Barnum's elephant "Juno" caught cold at the winter quarters in Bridgeport, and was given two gallons of whisky and wrapped in blankets soaked in brandy in hopes of curing her. The dose made the animal "jolly," and she tore away her blankets, staggered about among the herd of animals and conducted herself generally in an undignified manner.

A WORTHY GIFT.

Who grows two blades of grass, wherein
  Of old but one was grown—
Has found a key of life, and made
  Its greatest joys his own.
To that extent he builds the world,
  And adds unto its store
Of Good, until the total stands
  Thus better than before.

So he or that which brings more bliss
  Unto sad human hearts,
Has learned the secret of the best
  And noblest of all arts.
If then a gift—a worthy gift—
  So much true pleasure lends—
Why should not you present THE POST
  This Christmas to your friends?

—THE EDITOR.

Their Rich Relations.

BY ANNIE THOMAS.

"HOW are we going to spend our Christmas, Meg?"

The question was asked at an unfortunate moment, for Margaret Lennox had just walked through a puddle, invisible in the darkness of a cold, rainy December night, and was thus unpleasantly reminded that her boots were in such bad condition that part of her next week's salary must be invested in a new pair; so it was not in her sweetest tones she made reply:

"How and where should we spend it, but at home, as usual?"

"Don't say *home!* Have we had one since mamma died, and we came here?"

"We are able to earn our daily bread," retorted Margaret, speaking more coldly than she felt; "so let us be thankful."

"Oh, yes!" said her sister Constance, giving herself a shake of discontent. "You can talk in that strain because you are stoical, or heroical, or whatever you like to call it, and don't object to stale bread and all that sort of thing; and never mind wearing a shabby gown or an old hat, and don't hate those gloomy, grimy warehouses, as I do. And you can always forget our troubles in a day-dream or a book; and, in fact, I think you *like* to be poor and friendless, and obliged to spend you days in the top story of a wholesale house, serving ragged customers with dozens and gross of baby's clothes and feminine gear. Yes, you must like it."

"Do I?" was all Meg said, in response; but the sorrowful accents in which those two little words were murmured smote Constance Lennox with remorse, and she squeezed the hand that was tucked through her arm.

"I didn't mean all I said, Maggie, darling—no, nor half of it. You are the bravest and best of sisters, even though you were the best of daughters; and, in spite of my grumbling, I'd rather be a saleswoman in the city, with you to share my work, than shut up in a schoolroom, a poor little despised nursery governess—which is all I should be fit for—and you, perhaps, ever so far away."

"I'm glad you recognize my value," was the half-laughing reply; "but you need not stand still in the midst of a pelting shower to dilate upon it. Oh, me! how cold it is!"

Thus reminded of the rain, both girls quickened their steps. From motives of prudence, as well as economy, they lodged at some distance from town with an elderly couple who had known them in better days, although this involved a mile or more of walking through a quiet suburb, as well as the ride from Blackfriars.

The same motives led them to be content with a room on the top floor of Mrs. Stubbs' dwelling, one of three tenements into which a large red-brick mansion had been divided, at the same time that the grounds surrounding it were leased to speculating builders, who covered them with rows of workmen's cottages and semi-detached villas.

Constance pounced upon a letter that lay on the table, while Meg set light to the fire, and commenced preparations for tea.

"The Misses Lennox, Hollington House." What a grand address it always sounds! Who would think that our share of the H. H. is one attic, and a peep from its window! Who can this be from, Meg?"

"Another circular, I daresay, or the programme of that local concert Mrs. Stubbs mentioned," Meg replied, carelessly, as she fanned the blaze under the little kettle. "Do take off your damp things, Con, or you'll have another of your bad colds."

"In half a moment. My fingers are so numbed I can scarcely tear open this envelope, let alone struggling with the buttons of my ulster. Why, Meg, there is a crest on the paper; and oh! do come here. What can this mean?"

Trembling with excitement, Constance ran to the hearth, where she knelt down beside her sister and together they read as follows:

"Miss Brown has been desired by Mrs. Cassilis to request the Misses Lennox to join the family circle that will assemble at Cheveley on the twentieth of this month, to celebrate the Christmas holidays, as well as to greet the return of Mr. Hurstleigh from his continental tour. A carriage shall be sent to meet the train that stops at Cheveley Road Station at five o'clock; and if the Misses Lennox will travel by that, they will have time to rest before dinner."

"This is an event!" exclaimed Constance breathing hard. "A marvellous event! The grandees of the family not only recognize our existence, but send us an invitation! What can have come over the spirit of their dream? Mrs. Cassilis was our father's half-sisters, wasn't she? and Alton Hurstleigh is her husband's nephew, and has inherited the large half of his property. I learned that much."

"And when poor papa mortally offended his uncle by his marriage, it was Mrs. Cassilis to whom the money was bequeathed that would otherwise have been his, so she can afford to be gracious to us," added Meg.

"But she never has been till now," Constance reminded her sister. "I must know why we have been so long forgotten before I can feel grateful for this tardy remembrance."

"Mrs. Cassilis resided abroad during the last years of her husband's life. At least, I think I have heard so," said Meg, thoughtfully. "But she might have written to us herself; that is, if she wished us to accept this invitation."

"Accept it!" and Constance laughed bitterly as she tossed off her hat and wraps. "Why, she must know very well that we are not able to do so. She cannot be quite ignorant of our position. It is a mere form and a mockery, and—and throw it into the fire, Meg, and let's do our best to forget it."

But Meg only slipped the note into her pocket, and quietly went about the room, hanging up her sister's discarded garments as well as her own, setting cups and saucers, and making their tiny fireside look as cosy and bright as possible. And not another word was said respecting the invitation to Cheveley till Constance, who sat brooding with her hands in her lap and her eyes fixed on the fire, looked up to utter a fretful protest.

"Do get a book or some work, Meg! I hate to be watched! What pleasure can you find in staring at me? Is it to see how discontented and miserable I am making myself?"

But in spite of a rebellious pout and a struggle she was drawn into her sister's arms, and her pretty fair head taken lovingly on to Margaret's shoulder.

"I've been thinking it over, Con, and—and we'll go."

"To Cheveley! Ah! If it were possible! There's no denying that I should like it dearly! But it isn't—it can't be!"

"We'll make it possible," was the firmly-spoken response.

But still Con was incredulous.

"You are the cleverest of managers. I know it's all owing to you that we contrived to pay the expenses of mamma's illness and funeral, and have kept out of debt ever since; but surely you are not dreaming of going to Cheveley in these old black gowns, and the brown velvets we wear to church on Sundays!"

"The velvets will do; although home-made, I flatter myself that they are very becoming; but we should certainly require a few additions to our wardrobe. We should not care to pose as poor relations too shabby to be seen till they had been fitted out with some cast-off dresses."

"Then what do you propose?" asked Constance, impatiently. "Say quickly, for I am on thorns."

"To sell these," and drawing an old-fashioned locket from her bosom, Meg touched the large and valuable pearls—their father's gift to his bride on her wedding-day—that were set round it.

Con uttered a vehement remonstrance.

"It is for me you would do this, because you see I am yearning for a peep at the people to whom poor papa belonged. But I will not let you part with mamma's likeness just to gratify my foolish cravings. No, no; I am not selfish enough for that."

"Dear," said Meg, earnestly, "I have never valued the pearls, and shall wear our mother's portrait in a cheap frame just as contentedly as in this expensive one. So say no more; my mind is made up. The invitation shall be accepted; we will spend our Christmas with our rich relations; and—I hope we shall have no reason to regret it."

And then Margaret Lennox fondly kissed the flushed face upraised to hers, and ruffled the fair tresses only to smooth them again, and tell herself, with secret exultation in her sister's prettiness, that it was only right that the kinsfolk of her father, the haughty family that had cast him off for marrying beneath him, should see how lovely Constance was, and how good; how worthy to be esteemed and petted, and even to be adopted by Mrs. Cassilis as her daughter and heiress.

Meg did not think of herself, or, if she did, it was to say, carelessly, that poverty did not hurt her, for she was brown and ugly, and growing old. Her age was twenty-four, and her glass had never told her what depths of soul and spirit shone in her dark orbs, nor into what marvellous beauty a flush of color lighted her thoughtful features.

While eking out the price of the pearls to procure muslin and lace, and ribbon, to deck her sister, she positively refused to procure anything for herself but a black grenadine for evening wear, and a cheap cream material that would do for a dance, and could be worn afterwards on summer evenings.

Constance expostulated and scolded in vain, so she consoled herself by drawing fancy pictures of a delightful future, in which she, having won the affections of Mrs. Cassilis, was sharing with Meg the gifts that lady showered upon her.

Nothing would be too good for the dear sister who bore with all her changeful humors, cheered her when she was moody, and took upon her own shoulders all the more unpleasant part of their work.

Meg was a darling, and Con, in imagination, was marrying her to a peer of the realm, when with a couple of battered old trunks, neatly done up in new holland covers, the sisters were set down at the terminus of the railway that was to carry them into Dorsetshire.

* * * * * *

They had no adventures on the road, except that, as a porter was labelling their luggage, a modestly-dressed young woman brought him a box, on which Meg read, in very legible text-hand, "Jane Merritt, passenger to Madam's, Cheveley, Dorsetshire."

Jane Merritt looked slightly surprised when, as she stepped into a third-class car she saw that the adjoining seat was occupied by the young ladies who were starting, like herself, for a secluded village in the heart of the country.

She was very much inclined to address them, and respectfully inquire whether she would have far to go when she reached Cheveley station; but Meg looked too stately to be spoken to by a stranger, and Constance was absorbed in anxiety lest the porters should crush a wicker-case in which her best hat and prettiest gowns are reposing.

"We shall arrive in style," laughed Con, when the modestly-dressed young woman climbed to the box of the carriage, into which a footman handed the Misses Lennox, as soon as they quitted the train. "Outsiders will think we have brought our maid with us."

Meg shrugged her shoulders, but was silent. She had known all along that "Madam's dower-house," or "Madam's," as it was more curtly called, was the name of the house for which they were bound, and that Jane Merritt would most probably hold them up to the contempt of her fellow-servants for the poverty of meanness that had caused them to travel by a cheap train.

However, it was not worth while disturbing the peace of mind of pretty Con, who was in raptures with the well-cushioned, luxuriously-fitted cab, and delighted with her first glimpse of the well-situated gray stone mansion, to which the writer of Mrs. Cassilis' invitation smilingly welcomed them.

She was a nervous little spinster, spectacle, and came half way down the broad stone steps beyond the porch, rubbing her mittened hands and shivering the while she expressed her regrets that Mrs. Cassilis was not well enough to receive them herself.

"A martyr to neuralgia!" and Miss Brown sighed, and cast her eyes upwards. "I'm sadly afraid there's a draught somewhere about the house." She peered round the hall as if expecting to pounce upon it there. "Quite fagged and poorly all day, I assure you, and yet *so* unwilling to lie down just as you were expected. I'm such a poor substitute, but pray come to the fire and get warm before I take you upstairs."

Constance willingly assented, and she was soon kneeling on the thick, soft Persian rug, basking in the warmth thrown out by the roaring, crackling logs piled on andirons: while Meg, a little farther off, was casting appreciating glances around the fine old hall, with its oaken panels, ancient armour, &c., until the outer door opened.

A gentleman in shooting-coat and leggings came in' followed by such a huge, fierce-looking hound, that the timid Constance sprang up and retreated as the creature advanced, keeping it at bay with outstretched hands, and piteously calling on Meg to come to her assistance.

The dog was promptly called to order by his master, who also introduced himself as Alton Hurstleigh.

"Of course we are relatives," he said, laughingly, "for only one stranger (my aunt's ward) is permitted to eat our roast beef and plum-pudding with us this Christmas; but I am ashamed to say I don't know in what degree of relationship we stand to each other. However, the word 'cousin' is sufficiently expressive, isn't it? And so, fair cousins both, I bid you heartily welcome."

"They are the Misses Lennox," Miss Brown hastened to tell him in a whisper. She always whispered, as if afraid that if her voice were raised too high it might disturb the slumbers of Mrs. Cassilis at the other end of the house.

Meg saw Mr. Hurstleigh knit his brows perplexedly, as if he had some recollection connected with the name of Lennox too vague to be immediately recalled. However, he teased Constance in an elder-brotherly fashion over her dread of his hound, took great pains to explain to her graver sister the subject of some tapestry that hung on the walls, and then reminded Miss Brown that their guests must be tired, and would probably wish to be taken to their rooms.

"The very thing I was just going to propose," and away went Miss Brown on tip-toe, dropping one of her mittens; her spectacle-case, and her handkerchief as she went.

Meg, always methodical, stayed to collect these waifs and strays, as well as half-a-dozen more—a glove, a fur tippet, a book, and some papers scattered on tables and chairs by Constance.

As she did so she saw that Mr. Hurstleigh was watching her, and he smiled as their eyes met.

Meg smiled too. Somehow she did not feel at all afraid of this clever-looking, bronzed, dark-bearded man, though he had the manner of one accustomed to command and be obeyed.

"You are amused at my old-maidish ways," she said, good-humouredly; "but when one's working hours are spent in folding and packing, and one's home is so small that every spare corner has to be utilized, to be tidy grows into a habit."

"I was not thinking of that, although I have lived too much on board ship not to know the comfort of having everything in its place," Mr. Hurstleigh replied. "I was thinking how very fond you seem of that lovely little sister of yours."

A quiver of the lip and an eloquent glance answered him, and then Meg ran lightly upstairs after Constance and Miss Brown, who led them to a very charming suite of apartments—bedroom, dressing-closet, and a very pretty octagonal boudoir, with windows commanding extensive views of the country.

Here she promised that tea should be sent to them, mentioned that the dinner hour was seven, and then—still on tip-toe—went away, whispering a hope that dear Mrs. Cassilis would be well enough to join them in the drawing-room, if not at the table.

As soon as the door closed behind her, Constance executed a dance of delight, then sank down on the hearthrug in an attitude of despair.

"Oh, why did I remember that this cannot last! That if I am going to dine off silver to-day, a week hence I shall be making my own toast, and grumbling at the saltness of the butter!"

"Get up, little silly, before a servant comes in and surprises you," counselled Meg. "Do you forget that our dresses will have to be unpacked and shaken out of their creases before we can put them on."

"And then we shall have to make our first appearance in public. What shall I do if I grow nervous, and stammer, and redden like a dairymaid, until I am ready to die with shame!"

"You will remind yourself that you are disgracing the memory of the dear mother who, in spite of her want of birth, was a lady in the truest sense of the word."

Meg spoke so gravely that Constance conquered her tremors and went to dinner as calm outwardly as the sister she clung to.

An excuse was made for Mrs. Casilis; but her ward, Viola Hayman, an affected, over-dressed, fashionable beauty, fluttered in, stared rudely at the new-comers, and did her best to monopolize the gentlemen. These consisted, beside Mr. Hurstleigh, of half a dozen Lennoxes; a lively Oxonian, and a lieutenant in the navy; a pale, quiet clergyman, who had brought with him an an equally quiet wife and daughter; and a jolly barrister, who confided to Meg that all these relationships were so distant and so confused, that, when briefs failed him, he should be able to find employment in setting his kinsfolk by the ears.

Alton Hurstleigh was the most cheerful of hosts and it was at his suggestion his male guests accompanied the ladies into the drawing-room, instead of staying to talk politics.

Meg and her sister, when asked to sing warbled that most exquisite of duets, "Oh that we two were Maying," their voices blending with a pathos and sweetness that atoned for want of finish. Their auditors would have been glad to hear them again, but Miss Hayman took possession of the music-stool, and kept it.

That she looked upon the sisters as interlopers, her brusque manner and neglect of the commonest civilities evinced; but Con was too flattered and interested in all she saw, and Meg too proud, to notice her impertinence.

On Mrs. Casilis' account the whole party retired early, and Constance soon talked herself to sleep; but her sister was more wakeful. She must have lain musing for an hour or more, when suddenly a light gleamed into the room.

Flashes of electric fluid are not common in the depth of winter, or Meg would have said it was lightning. But the incident was sufficiently startling to make her raise her head from her pillow and gazed silently in the direction in which she had seen the light appear.

Her bed faced the windows of the room, but across both of the long sashes were drawn heavy curtains of amber damask, that matched the draperies of the bed.

The light could not have shone through either of these.

Just as Meg was deciding this, it reappeared, and for half-a-dozen seconds or more she beheld, vividly illuminated; a female figure, shrouded from head to foot in long gray garments, standing in the centre of the floor, apparently gazing at her.

"What is it?" asked Constance, drowsily, disturbed by Meg's start.

Before any reply could be given, the figure had vanished, and the room was once more in total darkness.

Making extreme thirst her excuse, Margaret arose and lit the lamp, with which in her hand she proceeded to investigate the room. As there was no one hiding behind the heavy damask curtains, she was about to examine the adjoining apartments when her sister's voice recalled her.

"Is it a mouse?" asked Constance, who was now sufficiently wide awake to draw herself up in the bed and pull the satin quilt tightly around her. "Oh, don't say it's a mouse! You know how I hate them!"

She screamed when Margaret commenced an explanation.

"You saw someone in the room? Oh, Meg, ring the bell—ring it hard! There must be burglars in the house! Why did we come?"

But she subsided into her downy pillows when her sister hastened to reassure her on this point.

"It was only a woman?" Why didn't you say so at first, you foolish Meg? One of the servants perhaps, to ask if we wanted anything, or else you were asleep and dreamed it. Do come to bed again before you are quite frozen! What a shame to disturb me for nothing at all."

And being really cold and tired, Margaret persuaded herself that Con was right; she must have been dozing, if not actually asleep; and so crept in beside her sister and lay still till morning.

* * * * * *

Constance Lennox awoke in the morning with no recollection of the nocturnal alarm, and Meg prudently abstained from mentioning it. But while the former brushed and plaited her abundant blonde tresses, the latter contrived to make a more careful survey of the room than had been possible in the night.

Between the windows there hung a long old fashioned pier-glass; it was in this the light reflected the female figure, but whence came it?

Meg examined the opposite side of the room, which was long and narrow. These doors faced the windows—a narrow one at either end, besides the larger one, by which she and her sister had been ushered into the apartment, in the middle.

These smaller portals admitted them to the dressing-closet and boudoir, and these rooms she also carefully explored.

But there was nothing mysterious about either; three sides of the boudoir—a pretty turret-chamber—were glazed, and commanded extensive views: the other was panelled in a gay cretonne to match the soft chairs and couches.

There certainly was another door in the dressing-closet, but then it was fastened, and a wardrobe partly drawn across it.

Then Meg went and examined the key she had carefully turned in the lock ere she slept. It was just as she had left it, and a conjecture that Mrs. Casilis might have visited the room on the previous night could not be the correct one.

Meg began to look so puzzled that Constance inquired the cause, but was not put off with an evasive answer; and as she now declared herself ready, and a breakfast-bell was ringing, the sisters went down stairs together.

As they were leaving their room Jane Merritt came along the corridor. She smiled recognition, curtseyed respectfully, gave them directions how to find the breakfast-room, and then glanced into the yellow chamber with a start and an awed look.

"Did they put you young ladies in *there?*" she blurted out.

"Yes, why not?" demanded Constance.

Jane hung her head and played with her apron strings till the question was repeated.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon for mentioning it," she stammered at last. "You see, miss, in the servant's hall at supper they were telling me a dreadful tale about that room; but there's no truth in those ghost stories, do you think there is? I hope what I have said won't make you afraid to stop there!"

Without waiting for a reply she hurried away; followed by the merry laugh of the younger of the sisters, who protested that she had never slept more soundly than in this haunt of the ghost of Madam's dower-house.

Mrs. Casilis always took her chocolate in bed, and Miss Hayman followed her example. Indeed, it was nearly eleven o'clock when the elder of those ladies appeared to greet her guests. Constance was at the farther end of the hall playing at battledore and shuttlecock with Mr. Hurstleigh, the Oxonian, and the barrister; while Meg, by the fire, was patiently teaching the clergyman's daughter new patterns in knitting.

The dark eyes of tall, stately Mrs. Casilis glanced from the graceful, slender Con, with bat poised on high to strike the feathered cork, to the quieter, though equally graceful girl, who had risen at her approach, and then they fell angrily on meek smiling Miss Brown.

"Who are these young persons? These are not my elderly relatives, the Misses Lennox, of Holmesdale House, Westmoreland."

"Dear me! I—I—hope I have not made any mistake?" faltered the lady's humble companion, gazing helplessly from one to another.

"Do you ever do aught else? Why have you made me and yourself so ridiculous? and by what right have *you?*"—she looked daggers at Meg—"taken advantage of the error?"

"My sister and I received a note, written in your name, madam," replied Meg, striving hard to appear composed. "What could we think but that you regretted your share in our parents' misfortunes, and wished to atone for them?"

Mrs. Casilis gasped with rage, but the steady, unflinching look that met her furious one checked the answer she meditated, and she turned the current of her wrath upon Miss Brown.

"I do not know why I retain such services as yours! Do you do these foolish things on purpose to annoy me? Where did you get the address of these young women?"

"I believe I—I—looked for it in your address-book," was the stammering reply; "and someone I—I think it was Mr. Hurstleigh—found for me an old letter he remembered to have seen; I forgot where."

"Mr. Hurstleigh!" Mrs. Casilis lowered her angry tones. Alton was peculiar, and would sometimes ask questions she found it difficult to evade answering.

But Meg, who stood before her, as haughty in demeanor as herself, now insisted on being heard.

"Do I understand, madam, that you did not intend to invite us—that we are here through an error in an address? If so, let a conveyance be ready in half an hour, and my sister and I will return to town."

But Mrs. Casilis knew this course would provoke too much remark, and answered sullenly:

"Nonsense; the fault is Miss Brown's not yours. Besides; you are not my visitors, but Mr. Hurstleigh's."

"I am glad to hear it, I can accept his hospitality, and feel that it is given ungrudgingly."

"How very insolent!" exclaimed Miss Hayman, who had been an inquisitive listener. "As for me, I would rather perish than stay where I know that no one wants me."

Ay, and if Meg had only had herself to consider, she would have walked straight out of the house, no matter who sought to detain her. But Con was unsuspecting, and happy; why deprive her of the pleasure she was enjoying?

Not even spiteful Viola Hayman could do that. Half her ill-natured sarcasms passed unheard, for Con had not escaped the cold her sister predicted, and it had made her slightly deaf. From all other annoyances Meg shielded her so vigilantly that even Mrs. Casilis dared not disturb the peace of the happy, merry young creature, who had a smile and a gay word for everyone, yet was too innocent and refined to play the coquette.

In Meg's secret heart another reason was springing up for lingering at Cheveley as long as she could. It was the one, and alas! the only glimpse of the brighter, more intellectual life from which her poverty barred the highly-gifted Margaret Lennox.

In spite of Viola Hayman's disdain and Mrs. Casilis' haughty indifference, or perhaps to atone for their behavior, Alton Hurstleigh was exceeding courteous to both sisters. He petted Constance, jested with her, and chatted with her, spending so much of his time by her side that Miss Hayman would grow purple with rage and spite.

As for Margaret, the hours spent in his society, when he discussed with her some favorite author, or related some of his experiences during his travels, would have been delightful but for the coldly-critical eyes that watched her all the while.

It was not only Meg's days that were spoiled by the consciousness that she was regarded as an intruder, but the hours that should have been given to repose were rendered wakeful by a conviction that someone or something—whether a living being or a phantom she could not tell—haunted the yellow chamber in the dead of the night.

She would have been ashamed to acknowledge to anyone that she felt nervous, for who that lives in this nineteenth century, and is endowed with a fair share of common sense, believes in the ghosts handed down to us from earlier ages?

She could find no traces of any person or persons having tampered with the lock of the door. Indeed, it seemed impossible; and yet she felt sure that the muffled figure she had seen in the glass often lurked in the shadow thrown by the sombre draperies of the hearse-like bed she and her sister occupied.

She would have burned a lamp, but Constance had a fancy that she could not sleep with a light in the room, and would have insisted on knowing why Meg proposed it. To divulge to her the fears that were, perhaps, groundless, would be to risk marring her enjoyment of the rest of her visit.

Thank goodness—but she sighed as she said this—thank goodness it was nearly at an end! To-morrow would be Christmas-day, and after the following one they would bid adieu to "Madam's" and Mrs. Casilis for ever.

And yet Meg had had a glimpse of a life in which all was not toil and poverty, that she would cherish with mingled pain and pleasure. Those evenings, not spent in stitching busily at old garments, but in conversing with men of intellect, or in singing to Alton Hurstleigh the simple ballads that always held him spellbound, would never pass from her memory—never!

Viola Hayman might, and did, at every opportunity thrust herself forward; but Mr. Hurstleigh had a quiet resolute way of getting his own will, that not even his aunt's ward could forego, and it had been his will to make the sisters' visit to Cheveley a happy one; if he had not been wholly successful the fault was not his.

To-morrow would be Christmas-day; Constance who had tired herself and increased her cold at church decorating, had consented to go to bed early; but she proved so feverish that Meg resolved not to follow her example till she had administered another dose of a specific Miss Brown had come to her door on tiptoe to offer.

It had been a trying day to Meg. She was anxious about her sister, who inherited their mother's delicate constitution. Mrs. Casilis, after an interview with Mr. Hurstleigh, had glowered at both the young girls as if she hated them; while Miss Hayman, for motives of her own, had mocked and taunted them, and striven in so many ill-natured ways to make them uncomfortable, that but for a warning whisper from Meg, Con would have retorted and left the dinner-table in tears.

It was such poor, such petty spite! If a mistake, for which they were not answerable, had brought them to Madam's, it was only for two short weeks, and was not this the season of good-will?

As Meg sat by the bed on which lay her sleeping sister, and sadly pondered over such thoughts as these, a slight sound, as of a cautious footstep, reached her ear. There was no light in the room save from the nearly-expiring fire that burned with a red glow; but ere long her eyes, accustomed to the darkness, saw the doors of the boudoir slowly open.

A pause, and then the same muffled figure she had seen before slowly glided along the wall in the direction of the dressing-closet. To reach this the bed must be passed, and ere it had gone far Meg started up, sprang forward, and grappled with it. She had been imbued with a conviction that Miss Hayman was playing the spectre to frighten her away, and this gave her courage to seize it.

A smothered exclamation,—a fall—a crash—a violent struggle to which may be added the shrieks of Constance suddenly awakened, and Meg's prisoner, by a desperate effort, succeeded in wrenching herself free and fled.

But not before such unusual sounds had penetrated both to the chamber of Mrs. Casilis, the ringing of whose bell roused the household and the library where Mr. Hurstleigh was still reading despite the lateness of the hour.

Before Meg had succeeded in pacifying her sister Mrs. Casilis, leaning on the arm of Miss Hayman, and followed by her maid appeared on the scene to inquire the cause of the disturbance.

Rudely breaking in on Meg's explanation she refused to credit it, even when the indignant girl held up to view a lady's gray waterproof circular cloak as evidence of the capture she had succeeded in making.

"It seems to me that the only thing you have made is a mistake," she sneered. "We are not credulous enough at Cheveley to believe that ghosts haunt our corridors and appear to our visitors, and our servants are too well chosen, too highly respectable, to play such pranks. I am obliged to tell you, Miss Margaret Lennox, that in my opinion you and your sister have contrived to make yourself quite too ridiculous."

Before Viola Hayman's insulting titter had died away, Mr. Hurstleigh quietly stepped forward. There was no mistaking the gesture with which he took the hands of Margaret—now trembling and speechless with agitation—and drew her towards him. Nay, he did more; he put his arm around her drooping form and tenderly supported her to a chair. They had often bid him choose a wife. That choice was made at last. And all the world might know it.

"This is the last time you shall be discourteously treated at Cheveley," and he directed such a stern glance at Mrs. Casilis that that lady nearly shrank into her velvet slippers, "Who it is that has alarmed you I cannot imagine, but I mean to find out, and that quickly."

Ere he left Margaret's side he raised to his lips the hand he was holding and looked into her eyes. Before that look, so eloquent of the tenderest affection, all her distress and terror vanished. She was no longer a lonely orphan with no prospect before her but the monotonous toils by which she and her sister earned their daily bread. Alton Hurstleigh loved her—loved her—and she knew that the dark days were at an end.

When Constance, still hysterical, had been removed by Mr. Hurstleigh himself to another chamber, lights were procured, and he and his men-servants—with the exception of a very smart young footman, Mrs. Casilis' favorite attendant, but who was unaccountably missing—went to the boudoir and examined it.

Behind the cretonne there was a sliding panel which enabled anyone in the secret to enter the room from the corridor.

It was thus the intruder had come, but whither was she going?

Mr. Hurstleigh now proceeded to the dressing-closet.

There the door Margaret had noticed after her first alarm was still barricaded by a heavy chest of drawers, but on examination it was found that the chest was on castors and could be easily rolled aside; and a key in the pocket of the waterproof fitted the door, which, when unlocked, revealed a flight of steps made in the wall of a turret, and leading down to the garden.

But who had stolen through the chamber of the sisters in the dead of night, and for what purpose?

Here one of the servants identified the waterproof cloak. It was the property of Jane Merritt, the new housemaid.

She was found in bed complaining of face-ache, which proved to be a violent bruise, received in her fall, and an inspection of her pockets revealed sundry useful tools for picking locks, and a letter from her confederate, the smart young footman who had invited her to Madam's to assist in carrying off the plate; this gentleman remarking, that as she was a modest-looking creature whom no one would suspect, and he had contrived to obtain, through a discharged servant, a plan of the house, including the haunted chamber, he had no doubt but they should make a clever job.

At the time this plan was formed the haunted chamber was untenanted, and Jane Merritt, on paying her first visit to it, was considerably startled to find it occupied.

As her attempt to frighten the sisters into vacating it proving unsuccessful, it had been deemed prudent to postpone the burglary till they had left Cheveley; but a rumor reaching the footman that his true vocation was suspected, the attempt was fixed for Christmas-eve. Jane Merritt thought she had made all sure by dropping a little laudanum into the cocoa Meg was to share with Constance, but as neither of them had cared to drink it, the scheme was frustrated as we have already described.

The footman had disappeared, but Jane Merritt spent her Christmas in prison, and Con had a short sharp illness, that confined her to her bed till New Year's-day. But the wife of the quiet clergyman proved a famous nurse, and after another stormy interview with her nephew Mrs. Casilis went off to St. Leonards, taking her pouting, muttering ward with her.

Alton was going to do something absurd, she told her friends, and was at war with her because she would not sanction it.

So she departed, callous and covetous, as when she deceived a dying old man, and induced him to wrong one who had loved and obeyed him in all things save wedding the best of women.

However, the clergyman and his wife stayed on, and so did the Oxonian, and the jolly barrister, and Miss Brown, with whom Mrs. Casilis had quarrelled so cruelly, that she accepted with much gratitude the office of housekeeper at Madam's.

And Alton Hurstleigh's two sisters came with their husbands and little ones, and amongst them the New Year was merrily welcomed. Perhaps the most important event of the season was that Alton's approaching marriage was publicly announced.

There was to be no delay, for with his arms clasped round Meg's slender waist, he had murmured in her ear.

"You must never leave me again! Talk of rich relations; who so rich as I in finding such a treasure!"

A QUESTION.—Which will you do, smile and make others happy, or be crabbed and make everybody around you miserable? You can live among flowers and singing birds, or in the mire surrounded by logs and frogs. The amount of happiness which you can produce is incalculable, if you only show a smiling face, a kind heart, and pleasant words. On the other hand, by sour looks, cross words, and a fretful disposition, you can make others unhappy almost beyond endurance. Which will you do? Wear a pleasant countenance; let joy and love beam in your eye! There is no joy so great as that which springs from a kind act during the day whereby some fellow mortal has been made happy; you will feel its glorious influence at night when you rest, the next morning when you rise, and throughout the day when about your daily business.

The Twin Brothers.

BY K. B.

A FAIR December morning, bright with sunshine flickering on every snowy leaf, and glistening on each shining blade of grass. A little unwonted stir seemed hovering in the very air: even the birds, hopping back and forth on the crisp sprinkling of snow, seemed chirping in a knowing way as they looked up at me out of their bright, black eyes.

Had not they reason to be excited? Was not the whole world—the whole world of Blankshire, at least—on the very tip-toe of excitement? For was not this night the night of the county ball? And had I not come all the way down here out of the fog and smoke of a dreary city suburb to be an actual participator in this dream of delight? It was all new to me, and I viewed it accordingly through the brightest of rose-colored spectacles.

To a little town-bred girl like me it was all wonderful—the woods, the birds, even the sparkling shining snow. And then the holiday ball! Not even an ordinary ball, but a fancy ball, and one at which, until the magic hour of twelve, masks were to be worn. My whole mind was full of delightful mysteries this might give rise to.

Upstairs in my room I had already laid out with great care my whole costume for the evening. What pride I had in it I alone knew; for had I not made it myself, every stitch of it—white quilted petticoat, white domino, and all? "Dresden China" was the dress I had chosen, as it would give me an opportunity of powdering my hair, an opportunity not to be missed for the world.

Many girls that day may have contemplated more elaborate costumes, boxes from the city or the county town may have been opened with a certain amount of excitement, but I do not think anyone turned from their mirror that evening with a more complete feeling of contentment than I in my home-made gown. I was all white—hair, dress, kerchief, gloves all but the vivid pink on my cheeks that needed no rouge dusted on the powder on my hair and the intense light of my happy eyes.

"What would this evening bring forth?" was the half-formed thought in my mind as I drove away from the door, side by side with my aunt in the big carriage. But no! I thrust the thought away. There must be no looking forward; the present was already enough. And the past! Just one little glimpse of it at least, enough to take in a pair of dark eyes that had looked into mine not so very long before, while a low voice had said in my ear, "So you will be at the Bankshire masked ball, will you? That is fortunate. My uncle's place is not very far off, so we shall meet again."

At the door of the dressing-room I paused for a minute. A fleeting shame suddenly upon me that I could not venture a step further without being in some way prepared for what lay beyond.

"Aunt Gertrude," I said, laying my hand upon her arm, "do you think the Mr. Eversleighs will be here to-night?"—shifting my eyes a little from her steady gaze—"have met them in the city."

"Mr Eversleigh's twin nephews?" she repeated. "Oh, yes, they are sure to be. They are curiously alike, are they not?" she added.

"Oh, no!" I exclaimed, impetuously, forgetting to drop my eyes. "They are the same height, and their voices are alike, but Mr. Ralph Eversleigh is much handsomer than Dick."

"So that is your opinion, is it?" she answered, with a little laugh. "Well, perhaps you are right."

We were in the ball-room by this time, in the midst of the lights and flowers and swiftly moving figures.

I was not long left standing. My aunt knew nearly everyone in the room, and partners seemed plentiful enough.

The hands of the great clock moved slowly on. Eleven o'clock, half-past, a quarter to twelve. In fifteen minutes the unmasking was to take place.

A heavy weight seemed lying at my heart as I stood watching the clock. A young man leaned against the wall at my side—a very young man, in the motley dress of a "court fool," his bells jangling as he moved.

"It's rather unkind o' them," he was saying, in a would-be lugubrious voice, "to say the dress is appropriate, but——"

I heard no more—hardly as much perhaps—for, even as he spoke, a tall, masked figure, in some old-fashioned uniform, had caught sight of us, and a moment later was by my side.

"The next dance?" he said, taking my hand, and looking down into my eyes. "No, you must not say you are engaged. It is the only one I can stay for. I must leave at twelve, and"—speaking lower—"I have come to the ball just for this one dance."

The opening bars of the loveliest, dreamiest waltzes were just sounding, when, with my hand on his arm, we turned from the crowd of dancers, and made our way to a little retreat, fitted up as a sitting-out-room with shaded lamps, the air heavy with the scent of hot-house flowers.

I seated myself mechanically in one of the large easy-chairs, letting my hands fall idly in my lap.

A dreamy feeling of happiness was stealing over me. The scent of the flowers, the strains of the band, seemed breathing it to me.

Mr Eversleigh was speaking. I must rouse myself and realize what he was saying. Was he too going to tell me the same story as the music and the flowers?

"Marjorie," he said gently, hesitating over the name, "I have something I must tell you, and my time is so short. Will you be frightened, darling, if I say the words very plainly? Marjorie, I love you!"

Yes, yes; it was the same story. I knew when he first began to speak. That was the story the music was sighing out and the flowers breathing into the heavy air:

"Marjorie, I love you—I love you!"

I could not answer. What was there to say? He loved me, and I? What need to tell? What I felt was written in my eyes.

A moment later a sudden sound startled me. Someone had lifted the heavy curtain that hung before the door, and two figures entered, a pretty dark-eyed girl in a gypsy's dress, and her partner, a green coated huntsman.

Mr. Eversleigh rose, and drew my hand through his arm.

"This is good-bye," he said, as he crossed the room to my aunt's side. "Good-bye to-morrow."

* * * * * *

The day after the ball was drawing to a close—the day that had begun amidst the splendor of the ball-room.

I was comfortably ensconced in an easy-chair by the fire in the library, and on the fender stool at my feet was sitting Esther Norris, the dark-eyed gypsy girl I had seen on the preceding evening.

"So you really enjoyed yourself, Marjorie?" she was saying. "Well, to tell you the truth, so did I. And you have met Mr. Dick Eversleigh before? It was a pity Mr. Ralph Eversleigh could not be at the ball, he dances so beautifully."

"But he was," I answered, smiling a little. "I spoke to him, but I did not see his brother."

"Not see Mr. Dick Eversleigh?" she exclaimed. "Why, Marjorie, you must be dreaming! I found you sitting out with him just before we unmasked."

"But that was Ralph Eversleigh," I said—"Ralph Eversleigh," repeating the words almost mechanically, keeping my eyes fixed on her dark smiling face. "I never saw Dick."

"So you made the usual mistake, did you?" she answered, laughing. "Why, everybody does that. No, no; I danced with Dick Eversleigh, and he said that his brother was not coming. Of course it was he you were sitting out with. I was dancing with Captain Forbes, and they were playing one of Strauss's waltzes, I remember"—smiling a little unconsciously—"for he said——" and she broke off humming a few bars of the music.

In a moment the whole picture had risen before me. The heavily curtained room, the masked figure of the man leaning towards me.

I heard again the slow, dreamy music, the scent of flowers was heavy on the air, all around voices kept repeating the same cry, not joyful now, but full of bitter trouble:

"Marjorie, I love you—I love you!"

With a little cry, I rose to my feet. The heat had suddenly grown intolerable. I made a half movement to the door, and paused.

Somebody was entering. A man's figure stood in the doorway. The man I had been waiting for and expecting all the afternoon; but now——

He crossed the room to my companion first, and shook hands with her, and then came back to my side.

"I come to you with a message from my brother," he said. "He is so sorry he cannot see you to-day, but he has been called up to the city on business."

I drew my hand slowly from his clasp, and walked over to the window. All the brightness had faded from the wintry sky, the snow-clouds lay heavy along the horizon.

"Why were you not at the ball with your brother last night?" I asked, the words sounding curiously hard and strange even in my own ears.

He turned suddenly as I spoke, and in so doing his sleeve brushed against a glass of violets, and swept it from the table.

He did not answer my question directly, but stooped and began gathering the scattered violets together. This done he rose to his feet.

"Business," he said lightly. "Man's usual excuse."

He had said it. There was nothing more for me to do—nothing to wait for. I made some sort of excuse, I hardly know what, and crept from the room.

Once safe up-stairs, I turned the key in my door, and walked over to the writing-table. I must give myself no time to think. I drew out paper and ink, and began to write hurriedly:

"Dear Mr. Eversleigh: You must forgive me. I think I was mad last night. It was all so sudden, I hardly knew; but now I know and feel that it was a great mistake, and the sooner it is set right, the better. Only forgive me. MARJORIE."

I did not read the hastily written words. I folded it, directed the envelope, and then, putting on my hat and cloak, ran hastily down-stairs and out into the garden.

The afternoon was very dark; a few snow flakes blew softly against my face, but I did not heed them. Down the dark avenue I sped, until the lights of the village gleamed all about me.

Having reached the postoffice, I dropped the letter in, and turned away with a sigh of relief.

That deed accomplished, my trouble seemed easier to bear, and yet I felt a time was coming when it would be hard enough.

The blow had been so sudden that I could not realise it at first; but already I was beginning to feel that many weary days lay in the future—days in which I should have to face and conquer the trouble that was closing in about me.

Three days later, as the afternoon was drawing to an end, I sat alone in the library, my chair drawn close to the glowing fire, trying to forget the storm that raged without, my thoughts so far away that even the opening door failed to attract my attention.

"Mr. Ralph Eversleigh" was announced; and a man, entering from the brilliantly-lighted hall, paused an instant, as if uncertain in the dim light whether the room were occupied or not.

I started hastily to my feet.

"Mr. Eversleigh," I cried, as he advanced slowly into the room. "You here! I thought—I heard you were in town."

"So I was," he said, gently; "but this has brought me back," taking from his pocket a little note that even in the dim light I recognized. "You know, Marjorie, that my brother's initial and mine are the same, so I have come back to ask for whom this was intended."

I could not answer him. What did it all mean? I took the letter from his hand—my crushed, untidy note—and held it between my trembling fingers.

"Was I right, Marjorie," he went on, "in reading a story between these lines—a story that might have been a tragedy as far as you and I were concerned, but for another story told me last night by Esther Norris—a story that brought me here to-day?"

Still I could not answer. Something rose in my throat and choked me. I had not shed one tear in all those dreary days, but how a sudden rush of pity for myself and all that I had suffered brought the tears into my eyes.

"What, crying, Marjorie!" he said, laying his hand upon my head. "There is no need for tears. Of course it was I, not Dick, who spoke to you at the ball. That was Miss Esther's mistake, and you believed her, you foolish child, and ask me why I had not been at the ball."

"Ah! Ralph," I cried; then turning to him with the tears still shining in my eyes, "Why did you answer me as you did? I think you nearly broke my heart."

"Shall I tell you my reason?" he said, more gravely. "That very day I had seen my brother off by the early morning train, and his last words were still ringing in my ears. "Not yet, Ralph. I cannot see her yet as your promised wife. I must wait till some day when I can meet and love her as a sister." And so, Marjorie, as I knelt at your feet, gathering up the violets, I seemed to see it all. The love is on both sides, I thought, and why should I be the one to stand between them? And so on the impulse of the moment I spoke. But indeed I meant it for the best."

There was silence for a minute or two—a silence broken once more by Ralph.

"I have given the letter to you, Marjorie. Am I"—bending down and trying to take my hands in his—"to consider it an answer to the question I asked you at a certain ball, not so very long ago?"

I did not reply in words; but, stopping, I laid the letter on the glowing coals; and together we stood and watched as it flared up for a moment, and then died down into a little blackened heap.

PRACTICAL CHARITY.—A newsboy took the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad cars, at Park Place, New York, at noon on Thanksgiving Day, and sliding into one of the cross seats fell asleep. At Grand street two young women got on and took seats opposite to the lad. His feet were bare and his hat had fallen off. Presently the young girl leaned over and placed her muff under the little fellow's dirty cheek.

An old gentleman in the next seat smiled at the act, and, without saying anything, held out a quarter with a nod toward the boy. The girl hesitated a moment and then reached for it.

The next man just as silently offered a dime, a woman across the aisle held out some pennies, and before she knew it the girl, with flaming cheeks, had taken money from every passenger in that end of the car.

She quietly slid the amount into the sleeping lad's pocket, removed her muff gently from under his head without rousing him; and got off at Twenty-third street, including all the passengers in a pretty little inclination of the head that seemed full of thanks and a common secret.

THEIR REMARKS ABOUT IT.—Miss Adelaide said: "I declare this dress makes me look five years younger. It's a love! I shall cut the other girls out nicely."

What the dressmaker said: "Thank goodness, that's done! She's awful to fit."

What the younger sisters said: "Addy thinks she is going to get off now that she's got that gown."

What the bosom friend said: "How very passe that color makes dear Adelaide look! So trying, you know."

What the housemaid said: "I shall take the pattern of that 'ere dress when she's out of the way."

What papa said: "Another bill for fallals? Shan't pay it! When I was a young man, girls were taught to be sensible," etc., etc.

"NO, Mr. Sampson, it can never be; I can only be a sister to you." He would have fallen, but he realised that one suspender button was gone, and the other loose. He panted and said brokenly: "Only a sister, Miss Clara?" "Yes," replied the girl, "only a sister. I must have time, but it shall be a sister of hope. Call again on Wednesday night."

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A "ribbon society" to promote temperance in dress is a matter which some women are contemplating. Extravagance in dress is increasing, and judicious observers sigh for a return to simplicity and refined taste. It is not probable, however, that the movement, if it ever begins, will amount to more than a subject of a few days' talk and many paragraphs. Love of, and emulation in dress has always been woman's bane.

According to a dispatch from Wellsville, Ohio, a strange fatality has followed the family of Thomas Dolphin, an engineer, recently killed in a railroad accident. While Thomas was quite young his father was drowned in his efforts to save the family during the time of a flood; that same day the young man's uncle and aunt were lost in crossing the ocean. Mrs. Dolphin afterward married a man named Murray. Her second husband was shot and killed by the accidental discharge of a gun he was cleaning. Then came the death of Thomas Dolphin's wife three years ago, his daughter's death two months since and finally the collision.

In addition to the startling custom of wearing odd gloves, the fashionable women this Winter have revived the Louis XV. habit of wearing quaintly cut patches of court plaster upon their dainty cheeks and chins. Walking and driving costumes are emblazoned with family crests and heraldic colors, which though ultra chic often produce very startling effects. Monograms and crests have been effaced from note and letter paper, and beautiful engravings of the writer's country seat or chateau have taken their places. Those without country establishments have to content themselves with "castles in Spain," or with simple sylvan scenes. What next?

It is not generally known that the Prince of Wales was very attentive to his old nurse, Mrs. Searrett, who died some months ago. He visited her at least twice a week, sitting by her bedside for some hours. On the last occasion, as he was about to leave, she, addressing him by the old familiar name of "Bertie," begged him to stay a little while longer. He returned and remained watching until she had fallen into sleep, when, kissing her on the forehead, with tears in his eyes, left the room, never to see his old and valued friend again in life. It is a fact that the bunch of white flowers placed upon the old lady's coffin were gathered by the Prince from the conservatory at Marlborough House, and tied with a ribbon by his own hands.

There appears to be a great diversity of taste among the crowned female heads of Europe with respect to ornament of dress. The Dowager Empress Augusta had a great weakness for diamonds, and on state occasions appeared in a flood of light. Pearls seem to have held the first place in the estimation of Empress Frederick, while sapphires are the favorite gems of her Royal mother, who is also credited with a passion for Indian shawls. The Empress of Russia delights in a combination of turquoises and pearls, while emeralds and pearls divide the favor of Empress Elizabeth of Austria. Ex Queen Isabella of Spain has made a collection of exquisite laces. The Grand Duchess of Baden, the daughter of Emperor William I., is said to prize flowers above all jewels.

Replying to the question "should women propose marriage?" Dr. Talmage answered: "Why, you are centuries too late in asking that question. Women always have proposed, and always will propose. Words are very weak things compared to woman's natural ability and loveliness. The most splendid being on earth is a good woman, and when, with all her attractiveness, she makes up her mind that it would be well for her to be the wife of some good man, and that it would be equally well for him, she captures him as easily as a regiment captures one corporal. It does not make any difference whether her tongue proposes or not, her eyes propose, her smile proposes. Until a man gets from a woman a proposition of that style he had better not make a proposition of his own unless he wants to be made to feel ridiculous all his life time."

The lordliness of the Washington State Department employes extends beyond the (the exclusion of other clerks from their building,) and they carry their aristocratic notions to the furthest possible limit. Recently a correspondent sat talking to one of the clerks, who at the moment was in charge of a bureau: the gentleman in question touched an electric button and a swarthy messenger appeared at his elbow in a moment. Not a word was said, but the clerk with a grand air passed to the messenger a lead pencil, the point of which had been dulled. The messenger bowed almost to the floor and vanished without a sound. In two minutes he again appeared and with an obsequious salaam he delivered the newly sharpened Faber to the clerk and again almost striking the floor with his head, he departed without having a word pass between the two. That is one sample of the way in which the air in the diplomatic branch of the Government affects the unsuspecting young man who is induced to accept a government salary for the service he performs there.

Our Young Folks.

ELSIE'S GUEST.

BY T. C. B.

OF COURSE around the Christmas season if one's birthday came it would only make the occasion the merrier, but it could not be celebrated—at least in this part of the country—by a picnic like what we are going to tell of.

It was Elsie's birthday, and it came in the summer, and if they chose to celebrate it with a picnic, who could gainsay such an innocent festivity?

"Well, what are all you young tadpoles up to?" inquired their brother Jack, meeting five-year-old Elsie and five would-be revellers in the hall, very like a juvenile hurricane swelling through the house.

"'Tis Elsie's birthday, and we're going to have a picnic; will you come?" returned Bess, one of twin-sisters, as being the elder lady among them all.

"No, thanks," returned Jack, in the dignity of his eleven years, looking down upon them and their festivities in real patriarchal scorn.

"'Twill be a jolly affair," observed Fred, two years his junior.

"Oh, no doubt!" and Jack spun around disdainfully on his heel.

"Come along; there's no time to spare," cried Frank, somewhat disgusted with his elder brother's want of appreciation of the honors offered him.

He and Fred being the masters of the ceremony, feast, or what not, the weight of the whole thing lay heavily on them. They were on a foraging expedition to the cook's region, and the order.

"Why, what a spasm of a picnic it is," laughed Jack, looking back at them as they went.

"To be sure 'tis," cried Will, the youngest of the boys; "we've only thought of it five minutes, and there are a lot of things to see to."

"And goodies to be gathered together," With this, Jack sauntered on, and the party set their faces cookward, as the boys said.

Well, a hamper was found, and cook was bought full and kind mamma sympathetic.

Then Fred took his pipe or flageolet as the master musician, Frank and Will the hamper, Bess and Jenny the umbrella, or Mother Gamp as the boys called it,

"What can I do?" inquired Elsie, the queen of the day.

"Oh, nothing! 'Tis your birthday, that's enough for you, you know," observed Bess.

"Then I'll dance," said the accomodating sprite, so she did, with many a step unknown to the ball-room mies.

So off they started, Elsie in front, the master musician next, the twin sisters with the umbrella at rest, and mounted airily at rest across their heads, because it looked more jubilant, they said—a word they had learnt from last year's jubilee.

"Why, what do you want that old Gamp thing for?" inquired Jack, who stood to watch them off.

"It might rain, you know, or we might want to keep the sun off," said Bess.

"Or to poke the old bull in the eyes. Where is the rendezvous to be?"

"We'll not tell you or you'll come to make fun."

"Oh, very well; beware of the bulls."

"There'll be no bulls where we're going," said confident Jenny.

"I mean bull frogs," said Jack slyly; the little girl being as much afraid of a frog as a lion. "There'll be sure to be some of them in the grass," went on incorrigible Jack, as the twin sisters shuddered, and Elsie stayed her dancing feet to shudder with them.

"Don't listen to him, you sillies; we're not afraid of a host of bull-frogs, nor real bulls either, are we, Fred?" said courageous Frank; and that master musician, just executing a very flourish of telling notes, shook his head, half spoiling the effect of the melody.

"Well, farewell, children; may your home-coming be as festive as your starting."

With this valedictory they set forth; Fred piping, Elsie dancing, a few bees and butterflies keeping them company, Frank and Will with the hamper bringing up the rear.

All the earth seemed to rejoice over the glad birthday, and what a royal triumphant tramp they had—on through winding lanes and bridle paths, the two with the hamper looking rather longingly for the camping-ground.

Yes! there was the very spot under some trees, away from the road in a wide grass mead, no intruders of any kind in sight, they had ofttimes visited there before, they knew the place well.

Down went the hamper, away went the boys with the kettle to fill it at a near by stream, while the three girls kindled a fire—Oh, a bonny blaze they made!

"Oh, wouldn't it be nice to be real gypsies and live here for ever and ever!" cried Elsie, as a bundle of smiles and happy thoughts, spreading out her hands to the roaze, as if she were cold, which certainly she was not.

"Yes, but 'twould be better with papa and mamma here," said Bess.

"Oh, yes; there are father and mother gypsies, you, we'd have them, and Mary, and cook, and ——"

"Well, we should'n't want servants I think, there'd be no kitchen for—oh, the bull-frogs!"

All three girls sprang up like grasshoppers, fancying they saw something moving in the grass.

But no, 'twas all a false alarm; still they wished the boys would come, and looked longingly across to where they had disappeared with the kettle.

Well, there was no use in trying to hurry boys, so they proceeded to unpack the hamper and lay the cloth; the kettle would not be long boiling; and besides the kettle was for tea, and this was dinner.

There was such a delicious store of lemonade of mamma's own brewing, and there was a meat-pie, tartlets—oh! lots of good things.

How tempting it looked laid out on the snowy white cloth spread out on the green.

The wee housewives stood in happy admiration surveying it all, when, turning their eyes, what did they see coming step by step steadily, as if sure of a welcome, but Parker's bull.

You may be sure that a panic seized them; three poor little frightened doves of girls, and their only weapon of defence their umbrella.

Ah! well, they poked and pointed that at him, but Master Bull scorned to be rebuffed by it, and he came on surely; and three little throats uttered three little cries, "Fred! Frank! Will-l-l-l!"

But no answer came but the low half proud, half sulky moo-oo of Master Bull, who hardly liked this sort of welcome.

"Fred! Frank! Will-l-l-l!"

Again the welkin rang with the names of our heroes who would not be afraid of a host of bull-frogs or real bulls; surely they would be able to put this one to flight.

But oh, they came not, while on came the undaunted bull.

He had crossed the river higher up from a neighboring field; that was how he came upon the scene; very peaceable he was as yet, and oh, the girls hoped their brothers would come and turn him back.

All here they were running in full cry, they, the kettle and all, and they espied the enemy too.

"Shoo! shoo! you great silly!"

So they repulsed him, or tried to do so, but who was he, the mighty monarch of strength to be repulsed against his will by three pigmies of boys?

On he came with the tread of the conqueror; so the boys had recourse to stronger measures.

"Let a push him," cried Fred valiantly; and he and Frank made a charge at him, and pushed him with might and main.

As for Will, he flourished a stick and waved his hat at him at a safe distance, as became a little boy, who had made no vain-glorious boast about hosts of bull frogs or bulls, as had his brothers.

But push as they may, they might as well have pushed at a mountain—ay, better, for a mountain has no horns; a mountain does not move forward if it cannot be pushed backward—no, better oppose a mountain than a bull.

For Master Bull's visage changed with this pushing; he grew half obstinate and angry, half confident; he seemed to say, "I won't, I can, and I will!"

Oh! a sort of rueful combination of expressions was the creature's face; a tower of strength was he, which shook itself, and sent three boys flying, as no tower has ever been known to do.

As for the three girls, they had stood by their brothers and the feast spread so temptingly, like "little bricks," as the boys said afterward; but now, when the monster enemy shook himself, and sent the three lads flying as to the winds, like drops of water when a dripping duck shakes his wings, they screamed and fled.

Well, it was the best thing they could do under the circumstances; girls have been known to succeed where boys have failed, but not often in fighting silly old bulls, best on coming to a picnic unasked.

So, like six startled geese, ay, the boys can expert no braver name—they beat a retreat; and Master Bull, muttering a loud and self-willed moo-oo, a little more grumpy, the boys declared, than the other, sulked on like a conquering hero.

"Oh, 'tis just like a horrible dream," cried Bess, she and her sisters clinging together, the boys like a wall of defence surrounding them and standing to watch the course of events, which were all at the will and in the working out of that silly old bull.

Talk about funny things in life being enough to make a cat laugh, surely any feline ladyship could not but have tittered, had she been there that day watching, as the children watched, every thing a picnic least were in jeopardy, as there was.

Nay, worse: it was lost, destroyed—any word will do that expresses failure; on walked the four-legged conqueror to the tempting spread.

Ay, he trampled up amongst it all, kicked over the lemonade—all it all fell before his clumsy tread, and no wonder.

Talk of a bull in a china shop, a bull on a table-cloth is worse; cattering about among the viands and dishes, the glass he had not he had planted his hoof in the pie and seemed to grin at the fun. The boys held their sides with laughing.

To and fro went the devastator, the spoil-sport, and of course the mischief was done beyond undoing. How he snuffed and snuffed at this queer provender, among the grass in his neighbor's field; how he slyly eyed those enemies of his, who said he shouldn't when he knew he could and should—ay, and he had.

Well, they were too small to harm him, and he would not harm them, he would not them go: so, no doubt, he soliloquised, staring at the fun, the waste, the havoc he had made, and then betook himself to his own field again.

"Well, what's to be done?" asked one elder brother of the other.

"Turn our noses homeward, and say nothing about it," was the other's response.

"Yes, yes, we must tell, or mamma will think what careless creatures we are, for all the things are smashed, every one," said sensible Bess; she and her sister weeping over the despoiled feast, as over a battle field.

"Well, 'twould be more open and above board," agreed Frank. "But where's the use of carrying back all that rubbish?" he sensibly inquired, as the girls were filling the hamper.

Yes, the hamper and the kettle were whole, so was old Mother Gamp and the knives and forks.

"Where's the use of leaving it here?" was Bess's equally sensible question.

"And where's the use of crying your eyes out? What's done is done." Frank looked very sober, though speaking thus.

Well, crying was silly work, yet how could they help it? being girls, as the boys put it; and so showers of tears continued to flow, while they crammed the odds and ends of the feast they had not tasted into the hamper pell-mell; ay, what did it matter, after all that had happened, so long as it was hidden away?

"I mustn't cry," said stole Elsie, "because it's my birthday.

And now for the homeward march. The contrast this was to their outsetting in the morning was too much for the tender-hearted twin sisters; they took their places in the procession with faces hidden in their aprons, shedding floods of tears as they went.

Next came Fred the master musician, his pipe hidden away in his pocket; surely it was mockery to blow it as a sad accompaniment to a sisters' tears!

So he mused sorely on, wondering in his boyish non-appreciation of such outward signs of woe if there was any end to a girl's tears—they all seem like a never-failing spring of—of——

"Don't cry so; you two," he blurted out, breaking in on his own train of puzzled thought.

"Oh, Fred, we can't help it," complained Bess walking behind him; so he let them be.

Jenny carried the umbrella, poor abject thing, drooping as they drooped; rising aloft in airy glory when their hearts were light, so short a time before.

Next followed the two with the hamper, and last of all came Queen Elsie in the lingering rear, and not in the jubilant van; a sad-eyed little maiden, her feet no longer attuned to music, but bravely winking back the tears.

And so marching on, marching on through the afternoon's sunshine they went, their faces homeward set.

"Well, you jolly jesters!"

It was joker Jack who came upon them, in a turn of the lane; and to his teasing challenge they vouchsafed him never a word.

"Why, whatever's up? How is it that you are back so soon? You look just as doleful as if you were all coming from a cat's funeral."

He paraded himself before them and barred their way, the jester.

"We are coming from a sort of a dead thing," volunteered Fred, in reply to his brother, who knew the secret must out before long, and they must be laughed at sometimes.

"You are a dead birthday, a dead hope or wish?"

"Well, just a dead—a wreck of a picnic; and a wretched bull did it all."

It was Frank who opened the budget, he and Will plumping down upon the hamper, and so the procession fairly stopped still.

"Whew-ew! what fun! was Incorrigible Jack's exclamation, grinning from ear to ear. "Tell us all about it."

Down he sat on the hamper like a mimic judge, to hear, sift and decide.

Fred told the tale of their misfortune from beginning to end, and all sounded so very ludicrous in the telling that the twin sisters left off crying in their aprons to titter, and finally laughed outright.

Oh, laughing and crying must be near of kin after all.

"I told you beware of bulls like a very oracle," said brother Jack when the tale was told.

"You said bull-frogs, you great teasing boy!" cried Elsie; "and perhaps you sent that nasty bull to spoil my birthday—there, there and there!" and the little lady boxed her jester-sleeve with her tiny hand, and laughing the while, for who could be cross with good-tempered brother Jack?

"No, honor bright, I didn't," was the frank denial; "why, I was just on my way to beg a cup of tea of you—and so! defeat, ruin, and d a t—ha! ha! ha!"

"You said death," then I am glad that," spoke Bess, peeping out from her sheltering apron.

"Well, I thought some one said 'twas a dead picnic; I meet you on your own ground, young lady. An well, what's in a word? 'Tis a lost birthday, eh, Elsie?"

He mounted the tired sprite on his shoulder, that all big brother, who loved her so, and so they jogged home. Elsie always looked back to this day as her picnic birthday, but her brothers said no: it was her no-picnic birthday, which she averred was no name at all for the unfortunate afternoon; and that the bull was not her birthday guest, though they said that it was her uninvited guest.

To Young Men.—Let the business of every one alone, and attend to your own. Don't buy what you don't want. Use every hour to advantage, and study to make a leisure hour useful. Look over your books regularly. If a stroke of misfortune comes upon your business, retrench, work harder but never fly the track. Confront difficulties with unflinching perseverance and you will be honored, but shrink and you will be despised. Seek to acquire the power of continuous application, without which you cannot expect success. If you do this you will be able to perceive the difference which it creates between you and those who have not such habits. You will not count yourself, nor will they count you as one of them. Thus you will find yourself emerging into the higher regions of intellectual and earnest men—men who are capable of making a place for themselves, instead of standing, idly gaping, desiring a place, and thus become a moving force for good in the world.

Moderation in Exercise.—The developed muscles is not so good as the normal muscle. Let the muscles remain soft. Exercise, not too abnormally increase the muscle, but merely to keep up the health.

When you have succeeded through training and handling weights in making the muscles hard, corded and knotted you have injured yourself. You have, in a measure, destroyed the elasticity of the muscles.

What a man requires is a symmetrical development, and that may be secured, not through gymnastic exercise, but through diet, gentle exercises and developing the chest.

I am more and more convinced every year of my life that all a man needs in the way of exercise to keep him in health is the use of calisthenics, two-pound dumb-bells and a good, stiff walk. Never exercise within an hour before or after meals, and not sooner than three hours after a heavy dinner. Exercise outside, if possible. After exercise take a cold shower if the system will stand it; otherwise, a tepid sponge bath.

In general the system is benefited after a cold shower if a reaction sets in within five or ten minutes after drying with a coarse towel. If, however, the shower is painful, and is followed by a chill and a feeling of lassitude, do not take it as it is injurious to you.

One should on no account exercise in street garments. Nature gives the longest life to the sedentary animal. The man who vegetates, only doing a moderate amount of exercise, preserving a calm and even temperament, enjoys the longest span.

The Barber of Persia.—A common sight in the streets of Teheran is the itinerant barber. The Koran enjoins the mandatine Mohammedan to shave his crown. The Sunnees shave the entire head except ing a long lock in the centre whereby, it is said, the archangel may pluck them out of the grave. But the Sheahs or Persian Mussulmans shave from the forehead down to the nape of the neck, leaving a highly prized lock on each side.

It is, therefore, common to see a man of the lower classes seated on the pavement going through the operation of having his head shaved. The remaining hair and beard are dyed, and it is rare that one sees gray hairs in Teheran.

The first tint applied is henna, an orange-yellow vegetable dye. Many consider this so handsome as to prefer it without the further application of indigo which most select. The last tint, combined with the henna imparts a durable and rather agreeable dark-brown color to the hair.

The women also have their hair dyed and join the eyebrows with the pencil. All classes make use of the bath at least once a week, the wealthy having steam baths attached to their dwellings. No Christian is ever permitted admission to the baths of the Persians.

To the public baths the women go in the morning, take their sewing with them, and; after being thoroughly rubbed, scrubbed, devote several hours to smoking the kalian, embroidering and discussing the scandal of the neighborhood, which they assiduously circulate on their return home.

Keep Straight Ahead.—Pay no attention to wanderers or gossip-mongers. Keep straight on in your course, and let their backbitings die the death of neglect.

What is the use of lying awake at nights, brooding over the remark of some false friend that runs through your brain like forked lightning? What's the use of getting into a worry and fret over gossip that has been set a float to your disadvantage by some meddlesome busybody who has more time than character.

These things can't possibly injure you, unless, indeed you take notice of them, and in combating them give them character and standing. If what is said about you is true, set it right at once; if it is false, let it go for what it will fetch. If a bee stings you, would you go to the hive to destroy the insect? Would not a thousand come upon you?

It is wisdom to say little respecting the injuries you have received. We are generally losers in the end, if we stop to refute all the backbitings and gossipings we may hear by the way. They are annoying, it is true, but not dangerous, so long as we do not stop to expostulate and scold our characters are formed and sustained by our own actions and purposes, and not by others.

Let us all bear in mind that "calumnies may usually be trusted to time and the slow but steady justice of public opinion."

What place is so rugged and so homely that there is no beauty, if you only have a sensibility to beauty?

PEACE ON EARTH.

What is the message that each Christmas brings
Sloee o'er the wondering Earth
Hover'd the radiance of those angel-wings
That heralded His birth?

Peace is the message of each Christmas Day,
A thousand times re-told;
The slow year's moons wax slowly, so decay,
And Charity grows cold.

Peace was God's first word to the Universe,
Breath'd o'er the chaos vast,
Where eyeless forces, elements diverse,
In ceaseless battle clash'd.

And Peace was His last word in later days,
Whom, when Heaven's Seraphim
Would honor with the very crown of praise
As "Prince of Peace" they hymn.

Peace in our homes and on our country fall,
And on the world around;
But in our hearts that Peace which passeth all,
The Peace of God be found!

ABOUT THE SEASON.

While there are certain facts which everybody knows concerning Christmas, there are others of almost equal interest familiar to a comparative few.

The first Christians solemnized Christmas on the first day of January; but on the day set apart to the Feast of the Tabernacles they decorated their churches and houses with green boughs, as a memorial that Christ was actually born at that time.

The first traces on record of the observance of the festival of Christmas are to be found about the second century, in the time of the Emperor Commedus, the man who desired to be called Hercules, fought with the Roman gladiators, and boasted of his dexterity in killing wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

He was also in the habit of sprinkling so much gold dust on his hair and appearing bareheaded in the sunshine, that his head glittered as if surrounded with sunbeams, and gave him the appearance of a god.

He was poisoned in the 31st year of his age by Martia, whose death he had prepared, and as the poison did not operate quickly he was strangled.

Diocletianus, the ferocious Roman Emperor, who rose from the position of a common soldier to the supreme sovereignty of the Roman Empire, leaves us proof sufficient of the existence of the festival during his time, for at Nicomedia, when he was holding his Court, he discovered a multitude of people gathered together in one of the churches celebrating Christ's nativity, and thereupon ordered that all the doors should be shut and the church set fire to.

Thus the church and the people were reduced to ashes. This was the commencement of what was called the "tenth persecution," which lasted ten years. By that one act alone six hundred persons perished.

Formerly the distribution of holiday gifts, in Germany, took place on Saint Nicholas' Eve, fifth of December, but in order to invest the festival of Christmas with additional importance in the eyes of children, it was transferred to the Christmas tree.

The fourteen days from the eleventh to the twenty fifth of December used to be called Halcyon Days, and were supposed to be, from their calm and tranquil character, an exception to the season, preparing the world quietly, as it were, for the coming of the Saviour.

The Romans held their Saturnalia at this time of the year, in commemoration of the peaceful and happy period in which Saturn flourished, which the poets have celebrated as the Golden Age. The lowest slaves had a temporary equality with their masters, who patiently bore every freedom of remark from their menials, and even submitted to the keenest sarcasms.

One day only was at first devoted to the celebration of the festival, but Augustus gratified the people with two additional days of sport and festivity. The out-cropping of the freedom and license of the Saturnalia are visible in many forms in Christmas observances.

The feast of Asses in France and England were more of these December liberties born of the same stock. In those grotesque Saturnalia everything serious was burlesqued; inferiors personated their superiors and sedate men became frolicsome. In a modified degree, in masked balls, masqueraders, etc., the idea has come down to modern days.

Owing to the uncertainty that for many centuries prevailed as to the exact date of Christ's birth, Pope Julius procured a strict enquiry to be made into the day of our Saviour's birth, which being found to be on the twenty fifth of December, the feast began then to be celebrated on that day.

It is also reckoned that Christ's baptism by John took place on the sixth of January, when he was about thirty years of age.

In the sixteenth century the King, Nobles, Courtiers, everyone down even to the meanest beggar in the streets, went a-mumming in masks, representing the heads of goats, of stags, or of bulls, and sometimes dressed in skins after the manner of savages, and bearing no little resemblance to wild animals.

In every parish a man was chosen, called the "Lord of Misrule," and he used to collect a large band of idle fellows who, dressed in various bright colors and covered with ribbons, went through the streets and lanes, beating drums and blowing trumpets.

The Grand Captain of Mischief acted as Master of Revels at the houses of the great in the land, and was crowned with much solemnity. He commonly entered upon his duties by explaining to the company that he absolved them from all their wisdom while the reign of fun and folly should last.

The old superstition that on Christmas Eve the oxen are found on their knees, as in an attitude of devotion, and that after the change from the old to the new style of calendar, they continued to do this only on the eve of Old Christmas Day, was widespread in times not so very long gone by.

This was the continuation of the old mediæval belief that an ox and an ass, present at the nativity, fell on their knees in a suppliant posture, as represented in many paintings and prints of the fifteenth century. Midnight spirits have also to forsake the earth on Christmas night, before the crowing of the cock.

To many things used at Christmas time beneficial powers are ascribed. The Norman peasant considers pieces of the Christmas cake a protection against damage by storms and against mad dogs.

In Denmark and Poland the crumbs are preserved until spring, to be mixed with the seed corn, and as medicine for horses and cattle.

Healing properties are attributed to the ashes of the Yule log in many localities in France, where by preference pieces of the cherry, plum, or oak tree are selected and sprinkled with salt and water, or with wine, for the purpose.

The straw strewn in Christmas times on the floor of Slavonic churches is considered as a remedy against sleeplessness, and as the best protection for fruit trees.

Grains of Gold.

Hardness ever of hardness is mother.

The liar is sooner caught than the cripple.

When two quarrel, both are in the wrong.

Never intrude ill health, pains, losses or misfortunes.

He who throws himself under the bench will be left to lie there.

People who are always talking sentiment rarely have deep feeling.

The Devil never tempted a man whom he found judiciously employed.

Bad memory has more sins laid to its charge than any other weakness.

The competitors with whom laziness' ambition seems to vie are the dead.

Remember the Divine saying, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life."

He who never gives advice, and he who never takes it, are alike unworthy of friendship.

Be not ashamed to ask if you doubt; but be ashamed to be reproved for the same fault twice.

Love, in all its shapes, implies sacrifices. Much must be conceded, much endured, if we would love.

Hateful is the power, and pitiable is the life, of those who wish to be feared rather than to be loved.

Talk to thyself and insist on a reply, yet not before the world, lest it think that nobody else will talk to thee.

Power exercised with violence has seldom been of long duration, but temper and moderation generally produce permanence in all things.

The cultivation of the gift of prayer dare not, any more than the gift of meditative contemplation, be left to accident, to become a mere affair of moods (of inclination or disinclination); for in that case prayer would far too often be omitted.

Femininities.

There is a cheerful ring in an engaged girl's laughter.

The woman who gets but one letter a year always reads it on the street.

Therese Lavasseur, the last flame of Rousseau, could not tell the time of day.

A pretty girl don't object to reflections on herself when they come from a mirror.

The newest silk umbrellas for ladies have handles four and four and a-half feet in length.

Somebody says that Chinese fur looks like the skin of the poodle. There is one little reason why. It is.

Racine had an illiterate wife, and was accustomed to boastfully declare that she could not read any of his tragedies.

Heine said of the woman he loved: "She has never read a line of my writings, and does not even know what a poet is."

Do not have your gloves too tight; it is neither graceful nor fashionable to see a six-and-a-half hand crowded into a six glove.

A young lady who refuses to kiss her beau is very ungrateful; she forgets how much she was kissed herself when she was a baby.

One of the latest wrinkles in women's finery is a large, ornamental hairpin, with a fine gold eye-glass chain attached, which passes over the ear.

The Empress of Japan has established a college for women, which is to be ruled by a committee of foreign ladies, two of whom will be Americans.

Be as kind and courteous to your husband as you were when he was your lover. Then you used to look up to him; do not now look down upon him.

A circumstance not generally known is that all mail matter addressed to Sarah Polk, Lucretia R. Garfield and Julia D. Grant may be sent free of charge.

A 17-year old nurse girl in the south of France, to avenge a whipping she received, leaped into the river with the child of her mistress and both were drowned.

"Don't you think it extravagant, Henry, to pay $50 for a diamond ring for your wife?" "Not at all; you seem to forget how much I shall save on her glove bill."

An Indiana woman who had a beautiful head of hair sold it, and with part of the proceeds at once invested in a complete set of "switches" and "front pieces."

A solid silver pap bowl, lately introduced, beautifully engraved in floral designs, with plate and spoon to match, forms a most acceptable present for a baby.

Princess Eugenie, of Sweden, who sacrificed her jewels to build a hospital where poor cripples might be nursed and healed, is regarded as insane by her family.

Whenever twins are born in Hartford, Conn., it is chronicled by a local paper, and a certain lady of that city visits the mother and gives each baby a handsome present.

One of the gentler sex says that the paradise of a strong-minded woman "is where buttons grow in their proper places, and where men cease from bothering and needles are at rest."

Gum chewers should take warning from the fate of a Newton, Conn., girl, aged 16. A piece of gum slipped down her throat and, lodging at the entrance to the stomach, caused a fatal ulceration.

If you are obliged to leave a basket of clothes that have been dampened for ironing longer than usual, put them in a dry place away from artificial heat, and they will not mildew or sour for days.

The Commissioner of the Department of Labor asserts that no girl under 16 years of age should be allowed to work, and that the country would be better off if none under 20 were allowed in factories.

Hubby: "I do wish that baby next door would keep quiet. Its yelling is a terrible nuisance." Wifey: "Why, John, that's not the Smiths' baby! It is over, in the back room." Hubby: "Is that so? The dear little darling!"

Unmatched gloves are creeping into wider fashion in Paris. For example, for second mourning a black and slate-colored glove are worn. At the opera the same situation is indicated by a cross-match of black and white.

First dame: "What shall we do to-day? Let's go to the matinee." Second dame: "Can't; we haven't any money. It takes money to go to the theatre." First dame: "So it does. I did not think of that. Well, let's go shopping."

Youngest daughter, to father of seven of them: "Papa, I can't, I positively can't stand the strain! I must tell you! I had planned to elope tonight!" Papa: "Just my luck! What did you want to preach for? Now I suppose I have got to stop you!"

One pound and a quarter of washing soda, dissolved in a gallon of water by boiling, makes a good washing fluid. When the mixture is cold add about one-half a cupful of ammonia (hartshorn) and bottle for use, taking care to keep the fluid corked from the air.

A clock modeled after a boiler and engine is an ingeniously constructed new timepiece composed of solid brass and nickel trimmings. The dial of the clock takes the place generally assigned the steam indicator, and each revolution of the governors counts the seconds. The whole is mounted on a marble base.

And herein is the whole secret—fashion is of the surface, while breeding is of the mind. Fashion deals with the behavior; breeding is a matter of the character. Fashion is a varnish which may be applied to any surface; while breeding is a method of making. In a word, fashion is but a shadow of a shadow; while breeding is the substance, unchangeable and unavoidable.

Masculinities.

Every man is a volume, if you know how to read him.

Never charge a bad motive if a good one is conceivable.

Learn to govern yourselves, and to be gentle and patient.

Learn to say kind and pleasant things whenever opportunity offers.

Dr. Talmage says the devil has many able lieutenants on earth.

Louis XV. said it was easier to make all Europe agree than two women.

"Was it the girl's father who broke off the engagement?" "No," replied the jilted lover, "it was her little brother."

Vehemence creates dislike, excessive mildness contempt; be neither so severe as to be hated, nor so tame as to be insulted.

Among the students at Princeton College is one 72 years old. He is studying for the ministry, and expects to graduate this term.

A person that would secure to himself great deference will, perhaps, gain his point by silence as effectually as by anything he can say.

A grand refutation of the statement that marriage is a failure is the unusual number of weddings in the "best society" of all leading cities.

A brass hand, grasping between its thumb and forefinger a mother-of-pearl pen, as in the act of writing, is a unique design in paper-weights.

A clergyman who married a couple of deaf-and-dumb mutes in Brooklyn the other day made a bad break when he wished them "unspeakable bliss."

Klopstock engraved on the grave of his wife two sheaves of wheat, thrown, as it were, carelessly together, with the words: "We shall ripen in heaven."

Beware of using any perfume but your wife's. A divorce suit in Jamestown, N. Y., grows out of a failure on the part of the husband to observe this rule.

A widower is like a baby, because he cries for the first six months, begins to notice in the next six months, and it is hard work for him to get through the second summer.

"A gentleman should never take a lady's hand unless she offers it," says a book of etiquette. This knocks our old-fashioned ideas about proposing completely askew.

Enjoy the blessings of the day if God sends them, and the evils bear patiently and sweetly, for the day only is ours; we are dead to yesterday, and we are not yet born to to-morrow.

It is "good form" to put in the marriage notice when you can, not only papa's name, but grandfather's and uncle's, too. Society would fain deal heavily in "honorable progenitors."

A Chicagoan has invented a new calculating machine which will subtract, multiply or divide with accuracy. It is said to work perfectly, and will save much time in commercial operations.

First citizen: "I'm proud of my wife. She can speak five different languages. How many languages does your wife speak?" Second citizen: "United States and baby talk. That's enough for me."

King Chulalongkorn sends the Emperor of China a wedding present. It is a stool, the cushion of which is covered with diamonds and big rubies. The Emperor will need half-soling to use it as a seat.

A hollow log of wood on two rollers has a precocious lad in silver seated upon it, holding in his extended hands two glass wells, the hollow wood serving as a pen rest, the whole forming an admirable inkstand.

Blinks: "Think your wife would object to having you go off duck shooting with me?" Jinks: "I'm afraid she would if I asked her, but I'll tell my little son to order her to let me go. She always obeys him."

She: "Perhaps you are not aware, Colonel Snarlington, that I had half a dozen offers before yours." He: "And perhaps you're not aware, Mrs. Snarlington, that I proposed to a dozen different women before I met you."

"Ma," said a Camden small boy, "hurry up and go into the parlor! Sister's feller is kissin' her!" "Killing her! What do you mean?" "I seed him put his arms around her and heard him say, 'Now, I'm goin' ter squeeze you to death!'"

Hope is a prodigal young heir, and experience is his banker; but his drafts are seldom honored, since there is often a heavy balance against him, because he draws largely upon a small capital, is not yet in possession, and if he were, would die.

The three most beautiful words in the English language are Mother, Home and Heaven. A young married man at our elbow says that all the beauty and happiness connected with the above three words are associated with the single word "Wife."

Cleanliness of person promotes health of body, and this in turn naturally begets purity of mind and moral elevation. Such persons are quite as much concerned in having the inner and unseen as tidy and as clean as the outer and the visible; they are pure from principle, not policy.

Of the 22 Presidents 11 received a collegiate education, although not all took the complete course. All but five of the whole number were lawyers. Ten were soldiers at some portion of their lives, and the majority of these gained the reputation which made them Presidents very largely by their military successes.

It is the proper caper this season to tie one's evening cravat, the made-up bow being considered too prim and conventional. The twice-around band of white lawn, fastened at the throat in the form of a neglige flat knot, is the vogue among men of taste. To wear a satin tie with full dress is considered an unpardonable sin against dress etiquette.

Recent Book Issues.

An elegant and valuable little book in all respects is "Oysters and Fish," by T. I. Murray. It is a list of the best and simplest ways of cooking these dainties. No book on the subject ever did its work better. Published by Stokes & Bro., New York. For sale by Porter & Coates. Price 50 cents.

"The Good Things of Life," in its fifth series is fully up to and even beyond the excellence of its predecessors. Made up of the choicest pictures from the well known weekly *Life*, it is at once a crown of wit and art. The pictures and accompanying remarks in all cases are marked by taste, point, and humor. Published by Stokes & Bro., New York. For sale by Porter & Coates. Price $2.50.

"Blue Jackets of '76" is a volume that will be especially interesting to boys It gives a history of the naval battles of the American Revolution, together with a narrative of the war with Tripoli, which was so replete with thrilling incidents and the most signal instances of bravery. The book is written by Willis J. Abbott, author of "Blue Jackets of '61," and is illustrated with thirty-two spirited full-page engravings. Published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. For sale by Porter & Coates. Price $2 00.

A splendid little book, in size and general get-up, is "In the Name of the King," a book of verse of serious character. Geo. Klingle, author of "Make Thy Way Mine," is the writer, and that both head and heart made his work a labor of love is evident from the feeling and taste displayed on every page. Price $1 00. "Uncle Rutherford's Nieces," by Joanna H. Matthews, is a story for girls, which while telling and teaching much wholesome truth, does it in a manner at once healthy and entertaining. Fine binding and large type. Price $1.25. Published by Stokes & Bro, New York. For sale by John Wanamaker, this city.

"Worthington's Annual" comes as near being a perfect holiday treasure as is possible for anything in the book line to be. It contains some two hundred and twelve quarto pages, each page containing one or more splendidly drawn pictures, from full-page down. Accompanying these illustrations are stories, poems, little essays, anecdotes, history, adventures, etc., everything in fact that can entertain a healthy boy or girl, and while pleasing them, do them good in other ways. It has a beautiful colored frontispiece and is bound in a style to suit all beauty-loving eyes. Published by Worthington Co., New York. For sale by Porter & Coates.

FRESH PERIODICALS.

The December number of *The Connoisseur* has for a frontispiece a charming phototype entitled "Close of the Day." "A Visit to Bailey, Banks & Biddle's Art Rooms" is the title of a handsomely illustrated paper showing rare designs in silverware. Other illustrated articles are "The German Family of Goldsmiths," "Old Valenciennes Porcelain and Faience," and "Chantilly and its Collections." Published quarterly by Bailey, Banks & Biddle.

The Christmas number of *St. Nicholas* is as full of good things as the pack of the patron saint after whom it is named. There are stories, sketches, poems, pictures, jingles and riddles. Among the attractions are "The Curious History of a Message," by Frank R Stockton; "Bicops Grimlund's Christmas Vacation," by Prof. H. H. Boyesen; "A Sixteenth Century Christmas," a play, by Chas. A. Murdock; "Little Saint Elizabeth," a new story, by Mrs Burnett, author of "Little Lord Fauntleroy;" "The Bells of Ste. Anne," a serial story, by Mrs. Mary Hartwell Catherwood; "The Silver Heart; or Faithful Leo," a dog sketch, by Mrs. Holman Hunt; "Ten Weeks in Japan," by Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd; "The Routine of the Republic," by Edmund Alton; "Novel Christmas Presents," and how to make them, by Elizabeth W. Champney, and much other good reading. The engravings are numerous and executed in the best style of the art. The Century Co., New York.

The Century for December opens with a frontispiece picture, "The Coming of Winter," and contains also a number of full-page engravings of sacred pictures by the old and little known Italian master, Duccio, in the Gallery of Italian Masters, which is now one of the most valuable features of *The Century*. There is a western story in verse, by James Whitcomb Riley, entitled "Last Christmas Was a Year Ago," and a Christmas editorial. A striking feature of this number is furnished by two articles on Henry Ward Beecher's memorable appearance in England in 1863 in advocacy of the cause of the American Union. But the two contributions to this number having perhaps the highest importance are the instalment of the Life of Lincoln, entitled "First Plans for Emancipation," and the paper by Mr. Kennan, in which he graphically describes "Life on the Great Siberian Road." The fiction of the number comprises "The Rise and Fall of 'The Irish Aigle;'" "Francoise in Louisiana," by Mr. Cable; "The Third of March," by Julian Hawthorne; and the second instalment of Mrs. Catherwood's "Romance of Dollard." Henry James has an interesting article on "London," illustrated by Joseph Pennell. Edward L. Wilson gives his personal observations on the route "From Sinai to Shechem," accompanied by fifteen illustrations. The departments—"Topics of the Times," "Open Letters," and "Bric-a-Brac"—are well filled with some of the best reading in the number. The Century Co., New York.

SOME SECRETS OF HAPPINESS.

IN LIFE there are certain great troubles that are unavoidable; but the majority of men and women suffer under the constant pressure of little troubles that are by no means necessary or inevitable.

There is the art of being, if not happy, at least cheerful, and a sensible man would rather be a master of that art than all the others.

It does not consist in shirking unpleasant duties or grave responsibilities, but it does consist very largely in refusing to suffer in advance of affliction.

Everybody has laughed at the young woman who was found weeping because it had occurred to her that she might some day have a son who would fall into the river and be drowned. Here was the extreme case, but she was the victim of a disease that is only too common.

Of course every one must have his troubles—we all know that, alas! But why should we be at pains to paint the curtain that mercifully veils the future with scenes of disaster and gloom?

Anxiety is, I believe, very often the result of temperament; but then it is possible to cultivate a habit in opposition to the tendencies of temperament.

It is possible to get into the habit of looking on the bright side of things, and of ignoring anything about the cloud except its silver lining. This habit of hoping is a good habit; it makes a man not only happier, but stronger, too, and so tends to justify itself.

The army that goes into battle expecting defeat, is not likely to win; but the army that believes itself invincible fights with a confidence that is half the victory.

After all, however, contentment is better than hope, so far as this world is concerned.

"We can all have what we like," runs the old saw, "by simply liking what we have."

There is a certain unconquerable complacency which, although it may appear ridiculous, must be a great comfort to those who possess it. We remember an old story in point:

A gentleman, travelling on horseback through a country new to him, saw a boy at work in a corn field. Said he, as he rode up to the lad—

"Your corn is rather small for this time of the year, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy; "we planted the small kind."

"But it looks yellow," persisted the traveller.

"Of course it does," said the boy; "we didn't expect to make much when we planted it.

That boy was beyond the reach of criticism and it was impossible to afflict him with any sense of failure. We have known men who expected a great deal though they only planted "the small kind."

There are people who go about in a vague sort of way who expect to become famous and rich. Like the rustic in the fable, they wait for the river to run dry that they may cross it, and grow gray on the bank.

One of the secrets of happiness, consists in finding enjoyments in genius, the fame, and the wealth of other people.

"Miss S.," said a distinguished divine one day, "you have devoted a great deal of care to the cultivation of your flower garden and I wish to say that I am very grateful to you."

"How so?" inquired the young lady; "the flowers are mine and not yours."

"Ah, Miss S., that is true. The flowers are yours; but they are in full view from my house, and they beautify the landscape, and I enjoy them as much as you do without having to take care of them."

There is a great deal of philosophy in that way of looking at your neighbor's goods.

If your prosperous friend builds a stately mansion, stand across the street and admire its proportions; do not hurry home to hide yourself in your poorer dwelling with envy gnawing at your heart.

If he is a great orator, hear him and rejoice in his eloquence. If he has written a popular book read it and share the general pleasure. Genius has wrought its best in sorrow and travail; but we may enjoy its works in our hours of ease.

ANTS AND CATERPILLARS.—A traveller in South Africa tells of a singular combat he had witnessed. He was musing one morning with his eyes on the ground, when he noticed a caterpillar crawling along at a rapid pace followed by hundreds of small ants. Being quicker in their movements, the ants would catch up with the caterpillar, and one would mount his back and bite him. Pausing, the caterpillar would turn his head and bite the ant and kill his tormentor. After slaughtering a dozen or more of his persecutors the caterpillar showed signs of fatigue. The ants made a combined attack. Betaking himself to a stalk of grass, he climbed up tail first followed by the ants. As one came near he seized it in his jaws and threw it off the stalk. The ants, seeing that the caterpillar had too strong a position for them to overcome, resorted to strategy. They began sawing through the grass stalk. In a few minutes the stalk fell, and hundreds of ants pounced upon the caterpillar. He was killed at once.

THE shadows of our own desires stand between us and our better angels, and their brightness is thus eclipsed.

Pozzoni's Complexion Powder produces a soft and beautiful skin; it combines every element of beauty and purity.

THE WEEPING WILLOW.

The Tyrolean peasants hold the weeping willow sacred; because, in spite of its prayers and tears its boughs were used to scourge our Lord; the sorrowful tree has never ceased to mourn and weep over the dreadful deed.

Fairest among the trees of Eden grew the willow. Tall and strong, it shot forth its many branches, higher and still higher, each leaf springing upwards towards the glowing heavens.

Exulting in conscious strength and vigor, it grew more proudly beautiful every day.

When our first parents' fall threw the shadow over every growing thing on earth, the willow alone remained unmoved.

Whenever the wild, roaming beasts rested under its shade, they howled mournfully, and their pitiful savage voices seemed to say: "Alas, unhappy tree!"

Then the willow, rearing aloft its noble head, thought in its arrogant heart, "Fools! I need no compassion."

And whenever the birds alighted on its branches, their joyous notes were changed, and their melancholy song the tree heard plainly: "Alas, unhappy willow!" But she rustled her dainty leaves, and answered scornfully: "I have no need for pity."

The summer insects, buzzing in the sultry air; the soft wind playing with the boughs; the raindrops, pattering on the upturned leaves—all seemed to murmur sadly: "Alas, unhappy willow!"

But still the tree grew strong in ever-increasing pride and beauty.

Many years passed. But one day came fierce and cruel men, who tore from the willow her glowing branches, and with them scourged the Lord their God.

Then the tree, shuddering with grief and horror, bowed down with unutterable shame, drooped its proud head to the earth and wept.

And ever since, uncomforted, it has never ceased to mourn the sufferings of our Saviour, but weeps day and night over the Sacred Drops of Blood which flowed beneath its branches.

Shrinking from the sun, it hangs its head and sorrows always, and when the wind stirs the heavy leaves, they murmur in their pain, "Alas!"

RATHER AWKWARD.—A noted tenor singer was once rendering a solo in church in "Te Deum," and misreading the instruction to the organist as to the use of the stops for the sacred words, sang out at the top of his voice, "Pedal, great gamba and swell," to the astonishment of the congregation.

He could not account for the uncontrollable and convulsive, though suppressed laughter on the part of the choir, and was not aware of his mistake until it was explained to him, when he was overcome with mortification.

Another instance was that of a well-known baritone singer, who inadvertently placed the stur on the wrong note.

He had adapted a famous air to the hymn beginning, "Before the Lord we bow," and instead of placing the stur on the first two syllables, he placed it on the last one and rendered it thus, "Before the Lord we bow-wow-wow."

The effect was wonderful. As he had a powerful voice his hearers were thoroughly electrified at this unwonted and unlooked-for canine imitation.

A POLITE BURGLAR.—The Hungarian papers contain exciting accounts of the recent proceedings of a particularly gentlemanly burglar who is now languishing in prison at Pesth.

On one occasion this man broke into a house, in one of the upper rooms of which he discovered a young lady, who, after returning from a ball, had fallen asleep in a chair.

He left the house, broke into a neighboring one, and obtained a quantity of jewelery; returning to the fair sleeper, he awoke her without alarming her. He then begged her to do him the favor of dancing with him. She had no choice and complied, the burglar meanwhile whistling one of Prof. Strauss's most popular waltzes.

When he had danced to his satisfaction, he gracefully presented his partner with the jewels which he had stolen from the neighboring houses, and, after kissing her hand, retired.

On another occasion he stopped a carriage which contained an old gentleman and his daughter, a remarkably pretty girl.

He made the travellers dismount, pocketed the old gentleman's watch and purse, and, having examined the young lady's watch, offered to allow her to ransom it for a kiss.

She agreed; and the robber rode off, remarking to the father that there was no impropriety, sir, in that kiss, seeing that the young lady's father was present."

The adventurer is said to be so popular in Pesth that the authorities are afraid to punish him as he deserves.

His photographs are in all the shop windows; and many women of fashion carry the burglar's miniature portrait in their lockets.

"I don't say marriage is a failure;" said Adam, candidly, as he sat down on a log, just outside the garden of Eden and looked hungrily at the fruit on the other side of the wall, "but if I had remained single this wouldn't have happened."

IT IS A MATTER OF ORDINARY PRUDENCE, to break up a Cold at once, by the timely use of Dr. Jayne's Expectorant, an old curative for Sore Lungs and Throats, and a sure remedy for Coughs.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

A real humorist has been found in Turkey. He is the new press censor of Constantinople, and these are some of the orders which he has sent out. They will make the average American local editor feel the value of liberty.

"Article 3.—Do not publish scientific or literary articles too long for completion in a single issue. Avoid notice to be continued, which causes uncomfortable tension of mind.

"Article 4.—Avoid blank spaces and suggestive dots in the body of an article. They tend to raise suppositions and disturb the tranquility of the reader's mind.

"Article 5.—Avoid personalities. If any body comes and tells you that a Governor or Deputy Governor has been guilty of embezzlement, malad ministration, or any other blameworthy conduct, treat the charge as not proved and say nothing about it.

"Article 6.—You are forbidden to publish petitions in which individuals or associations complain of acts of misgovernment and calls the Sultan's attention to them.

"Article 7.—You are absolutely forbidden to publish a word about attempts on the lives of foreign sovereigns or acts of sedition in foreign countries, for it is not good that such things should be made known to our loyal and peaceful population.

"Article 8.—You must not mention these regulations in these columns of your journal, because they might provoke criticism or draw unpleasant observations from ill conditioned minds."

THE NUMBER "TEN."—The reason why ten is a favorite number is obvious enough: namely, that we have ten fingers. When we begin to count, we almost of necessity do so with our fingers. If the number of things be very large, the collection is naturally grouped again by tens, and so we have hundreds. A further grouping of hundreds leads to thousands, and so forth.

Thus we get the ordinary system of numeration, and there can be no manner of doubt that man's ten fingers are the root of it. We are told in treatises on arithmetic that it would have been much more convenient if we had engaged to count by twelves instead of by tens; and possibly this may be true.

But, if it be, we have so much the more evidence, if evidence be needed, that the basis of the system of counting was not determined by theoretical considerations, but by the simple elementary fact of the number of human digits being ten and not twelve.

LIFE IN A VILLAGE.—Stranger: "Pretty little village this."

Native: "Yes, we pride ourselves on its beauty."

S.: "I have always lived in town, but when I see such a charming place as this I sigh for the quiet and repose of village life. One, however, gets so used to the excitement of a large city that life in the country would be tame, dull; in short, one would die of ennui."

N.: "Think so?"

S.: "Oh, yes; village life is so calm, so peaceful, one would forget that one belonged to the world and leave it."

N.: "Well, I don't know much about the excitements of town, but I know something about those of a village. We've got two reading societies here, a church choir, a brass band, and an amateur dramatic club, and if you come here, it won't be with ennui that you will die, I'm sure."

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A Watch for $38
Fully EQUAL for Accuracy, Durability, Appearance and Service, to any $75.00 Watch.
Philadelphia's building association have done much toward building it up and making it the city of homes. These same system of co-operation carefully & economically managed, has built up The Keystone Watch Club Co. until they are now selling more Watches to consumers than all others combined. They handle only the
Keystone Dust-proof Watch
which is deservedly regarded as the crown and climax of Pennsylvania's manufactures. This Watch contains every essential to an accurate timekeeper, and many important improvements patented by the Company. They are Dust and Damp Proof, a quality possessed by no other movement in the world. Jeweled with genuine rubies. Patent Stem Wind & Set, strongest and simplest. Sold through authorized agents at $38.00. Either all cash down or $1.00 per week.
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$2.00
A perfect protection against magnetism. Fits any watch. Sent by mail on receipt of price.
We refer to any Commercial Agency
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WALNUT ST.
PHILA.
OUR
$10
14-Karat Gold
Filled CHAIN
is guaranteed to wear 20 Years, and is 33⅓% 14-Karat Solid Gold
Look for the stamps K.W.C.Co. 14K. F.L.D.—and buy the BEST.

Humorous.

THE SOLILOQUY.

Fair Amoretta sighing said—
"Nineteen am I, and still unwed;
While other girls have swains in plenty,
Not one the luckless times have sent me!"

Young Leonard strolling careless by,
Heard the forlorn one's pensive sigh;
And straight his heart, betrayed by pity,
Love entering captured all the city.

Then said he to th' astonished fair—
"Banish, dear maid, thy cause of care.
Since swains thou'st none, for lack of better,
Take me, take me, O Amoretta!"

MORAL.

Ye maids who lie awake o' nights,
Thinking of love and love's delights,
Hie ye to some soft shady grove
Where coos the amorous turtle dove;
And when a youth of gentle mien
Comes strolling near your leafy screen,
Be not too coy, and not too proud,
But, like Romeo's Juliet, think aloud.

—U. N. NONE.

Designing men—Architects.

Born to rule—a bookkeeper.

Fowl play—Raffling turkeys.

Rifle practice—Pocket-picking.

Unredeemable bonds—Vagabonds.

High words—Dialogue in a balloon.

Ground rents—The effects of an earthquake.

Universal profession — That of gold-chaser.

A dead reckoning—Calculating one's funeral expenses.

Who was Richard the Third before he was himself again.

Eating between meals is not so unhealthy as drinking between drinks.

When is a crow absolutely inexcusable?—When it's a raven without cawe.

Never travel without a pocket-companion. A well-filled pocket-book is the best.

The man who sat on a paper of tacks said they reminded him of the income-tax.

A writer on school discipline says, "Without a liberal use of the rod, it is impossible to make boys smart."

Why is the money you are in the habit of giving to the poor like a newly-born babe?—Because it's precious little.

People who take moonlight strolls on railroad tracks shouldn't be offended if the coroner doesn't recognize them.

A tailor advertises to guarantee his customers "good fits." If he doesn't give them fits by his tailoring, he probably will by his charges.

The Missouri pigs are so fat that in order to find out where their heads are it is necessary to make them squeal, and then judge by the sound.

The busy bee is held up as an example of industry to boys, yet what a terrible example he is. If boys were like bees you couldn't stick your nose into a school-room without getting it thumped.

"Papa, it's going to snow before long, ain't it?" asked a little hopeful, and when his father replied by asking him what made him think so, said: "Why, I see the Christmas things in the store windows."

Miss Keand, to handsome young physician: "Oh, doctor, how do you do? You look killing this evening!" Young physician, quietly:—"Thank you, but I'm not: I'm off duty, don't you know."

Mrs. Jason: "Jediel, was there ever such person as the fool-killer?" Mr. Jason. "What idiotic questions you do ask. How the dickens do I know? I never met him." Mrs. Jason: "Oh, I know that!"

To "Young Housekeeper"—If you intend to stuff your Christmas turkey with oysters, you should certainly first remove the shells. People should not put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their teeth.

A boy who had been starving himself for some time in anticipation of a Christmas feast was heard to remark to a companion that he was so empty that he heard the first mouthful strike on the bottom of his boots.

"My brothers are lucky dogs. One of them married two big farms and the other married a half interest in a national bank." "They are lucky indeed. What did you get with your wife?" "Me? Oh, I got a limber jaw and a pair of ice-cold feet!"

A Paris policeman, being summoned into the presence of a man who had just shot himself dead, after severely wounding a woman, displayed his anxiety to arrive at the facts of the case by excitedly demanding of the only surviving witness of the fray: "Did this man kill himself before he fired at this lady or not?"

A little girl, caught by the glitter of the shining bracelets on the visitor's fair arm, under the usual puffy glove, insisted on borrowing them. Her wish was granted, and she ran out of the room to show her new attractions to her grandma. Presently she came running back. "Well," said her mother, "did you show the bracelets to your grandmamma?" "Yes, ma." "And what did she say?" "She said they were plated."

"True as steel" and as unerring as the mariner's compass is Dr. Bull's Cough Syrup.

As a pain-destroyer no liniment in the market equals Salvation Oil. Price only 25 cents.

THE ODOMETER.—A new amusement is called the odometer. This is the way it is done: A ring, a fragment of shell-lac, or any other substance, similarly suspended from the first joint of the forefinger by a thread or piece of silk is called an odometer.

It is asserted that, suspended over certain objects, at present unlimited in number, the odometer swings in well-defined but different directions, as if acted upon by some unseen magnetic power. For instance, suspend a bit of shell-lac over a pile of dollars, and we have longitudinal oscillations.

Experimenter, continuing above experiment, takes with his unengaged hand the hand of a person of the opposite sex. Result—transverse oscillations of the odometer. Then, the experiment being continued, let a person of the sex of the experimenter take and hold the unengaged hand of the second party.

Result—longitudinal oscillations of the odometer. And so on without end. By substituting a woman's hair in place of the silk medium, an entire reversal of the oscillations will take place, and a transverse motion will ensue, as if the operator had grasped with his disengaged hand the hand of a person of the opposite sex.

IN all things reason should prevail; it is quite another thing to be stiff, than steady in an opinion.

AN acre of performance is worth the whole world of promise.

GOOD SENSE CORSET WAISTS
FERRIS' Pat.
Ring Buckle at Hip for Hose Supporters.
Tape-fastened Buttons
Cord-Edge Button Holes.
Best Materials throughout.
FIT ALL ages.
BEST for Health, Comfort, Wear, and Finish.
Children .50 .70 .75.
Misses .70 .75 .80 .85
Young Ladies 1.00 1.10
Ladies 1.00 1.25 1.50 1.75 2.00
Buttons FROST instead of Clasps.
Mailed Free on receipt of price. Send for Circular.
For sale by all Leading Retailers.
FERRIS BROS., Mfrs.
341 Broadway, N.Y.
MARSHALL FIELD & CO., CHICAGO, Wholesale Western Agts.

RUPTURE.—My son was ruptured from birth until 7 years old. I took him to doctors, hospitals and University of Pennsylvania with no relief. Growing worse, until I took him to Dr. J. B. Mayer, 811 Arch st., Phila.; he gave him ease at once and entirely cured him. William Dix, 1836 Montrose st., Philadelphia.

SEE HERE! Why not save one half on 1000 useful articles? Send for Catalogue. Big pay to agents. CHICAGO SCALE CO., Chicago, Ill.

Photos 20 Lovely full length Beauties, only 10c; 60 for 25c. Thurber & Co., Bay Shore, N. Y.

4 PACKS OF CARDS FREE. One Pack May I C U Home Cards, One Pack Hold

25 CTS. PISO'S CURE FOR CURES WHERE ALL ELSE FAILS. Best Cough Syrup. Tastes good. Use in time. Sold by druggists. CONSUMPTION 25 CTS.

QUICK CUT THIS OUT, and return to us with 28 cts. for a newly IMPORTED NOVELTY, retailing at $1.00, and our Catalogue of Fast selling goods. Everybody wants one. Fastest seller ever imported. Agents Make 100 to 200 per ct. Address PREMIUM NOVELTY CO., No. 81, Baltimore, Md.

GOLD WATCHES FREE!

We are going to Give Away a Solid Gold Watch; Hunting Case, Stem Winder, worth $50.00 Absolutely Free, to the first person answering this advertisement and telling correctly the names of all the Presidents of the U. S. since and including Washington, and will also send us the names and addresses of ten of your friends to whom we can send our catalogue of Watches and Silverware. If there be more than one correct answer the second will also receive a Solid Gold Watch worth $40; the third a Solid Gold Watch worth $30; the fourth a Silver Watch worth $25. Each of the next 20 if there are that many correct answers, a very handsome Gold Finished Watch. All are clear Genuine Watches warranted. With your answer send 20 cts. to help pay postage and the expense of this adv't. To everyone answering and complying with above request will be sent Free, the choice of an Elegant Silver Plated Butter Knife or Sugar Spoon. This is a genuine offer and made solely to get our Catalogue before the public, from which we confidently expect many sales. This offer is limited to March 1st. Address HOME MAN'F'G CO., 26 Knapp Street, - Boston, Mass.

Wanamaker's.

PHILADELPHIA, December 3, 1888.

PLAIDS ARE AT THEIR BRIGHTEST. A WEALTH of them, as if every tartan possibility had been sunstamped on these warm, soft wools. We don't pretend to count them. There's nothing short. Stripes and cluster stripes and broken stripes, prism tinted, crossed criss-crossed and tangled. Nothing that seems dull or dead.

Let one of the quietest, simplest styles stand for all. A plaid camel-hair, cut into half-inch squares by half-inch wide stripes both ways, and sprinkled with bright specks like buttercups in a June meadow. A first-class, good weight, 42-inch stuff. It has been $1.25, now 75c. Not a grain of reason for the drop, or for the drop in dozens more dress-stuffs—except that we don't wait till sundown of a season to do such things.

MORE AND MORE ROOM FOR HANDKERCHIEFS. It is always so this time of year. 34 feet of counters does very well for samples, but that's before the quick steps of the Holiday buying begins. There is now:

One long counter for Silk Handkerchiefs.
One long counter for Men's Linen Handkerchiefs.
Two long counters for Women's Linen Handkerchiefs.

The Linen is Pure Linen. We've said that time and again, but you can't hear it too often. Linen is Linen here, just as everything else in the store is exactly what we say it is.

The little Handkerchiefs for boys and girls are just as true flax as the big ones for bigger folks. You may have them

printed	revered
embroidered	scalloped
hemstitched	diced

or with fancy sewing.

Let one kind—Ladies' embroidered White Linen Handkerchiefs—show how varieties run: One hundred and fifty-six distinct styles, 35c to $4 each. Every one new this season. We never had anything approaching them for sorts. And we've made no count of the picket of Women's White Linen Handkerchiefs, embroidered or hemstitched, at 25c. and under (a wonderfully good one at 12½c), or of the higher flight into white, lace edged goods up to $6 each.

Women's plain White Linen Handkerchiefs, ¼, ⅜, ½, 1, 1¼ and 2 inch hems, $1 to $4.20 a dozen.

We believe our Women's 12½c. white unlaundered Initial Handkerchief the best for the money ever sold. Dimes do as much accordingly for you in another grade.

Misses' Handkerchiefs, scalloped, hemstitched, embroidered and printed, 10 to 25c.

Boys' Handkerchiefs, woven border, 5, 6 and 8c.

So the story runs—but you haven't had half of it.

JOHN WANAMAKER.

SEA-SALT SOAP.

Possesses the tonic, purifying properties of a seabath, curing all local skin and scalp diseases, pimples, blotches, eczema, tetter, chafing, etc. It is made from perfectly pure materials and is most healing and invigorating to the skin, keeping it in a fresh, clean and healthy condition. Sold by druggists and fancy goods dealers, or sent by mail one cake for 25 cts. or three for 60 cts. by the proprietors.

R. H. McDONALD DRUG CO.,
533 Washington St., New York.

30 New Styles, Gold Oval, Hidden Name and Border Floral Cards, with name, 10cts. 20 New samples every month 4 cts. Clinton Bros., Clintonville, Conn.

GOOD-BYE, my Lover, Good-Bye, &c.

PATENTS For INVENTORS! Send for Pamphlet. PATRICK O'FARRELL, Att'y at Law, Washington, D.C.

99 Sample Styles of Hidden Name and Fancy Floral Cards, Sample of Floral Border, Reward Card, Perfume, Transparent Cards, Gold and Lightning Cut Cards, Agents Outfit, all for 2c. and a 2 cent stamp. ROSE AND TOUCH, CADIZ, OHIO.

DOLLARD & CO.,

1223 CHESTNUT ST., Philadelphia. Premier Artists IN HAIR.

Inventors of the celebrated GOSSAMER VENTILATING WIG and ELASTIC BAND TOUPEE.

Instructions to enable Ladies and Gentlemen to measure their own heads with accuracy:

FOR WIGS, INCHES.
No. 1. The round of the head.
No. 2. From forehead over the head to neck.
No. 3. From ear to ear over the top.
No. 4. From ear to ear round the forehead.

TOUPEE AND SCALPS, INCHES.
No. 1. From forehead back as far as bald.
No. 2. Over forehead as far as required.
No. 3. Over the crown of the head.

They have always ready for sale a splendid Stock of Gents' Wigs, Toupees, Ladies' Wigs, Half Wigs, Frizettes, Braids, Curls, etc., beautifully manufactured, and as cheap as any establishment in the Union. Letters from any part of the world will receive attention.

Dollard's Herbanium Extract for the Hair.

This preparation has been manufactured and sold at Dollard's for the past fifty years, and its merits are such that, while it has never yet been advertised, the demand for it keeps a daily increase.

Also Dollard's Regenerative Cream, to be used in conjunction with the Herbanium when the Hair is naturally dry and needs an oil.

TESTIMONIALS.

The following testimonials from well known persons who have used this Wash for a number of years, and been greatly benefited by it, are sufficient proof that it is all that is claimed for it:—

NAVY PAY OFFICE, Philadelphia.

I have used "Dollard's Herbanium Extract, or Vegetable Hair Wash," regularly for upwards of five years with great advantage. My hair, from rapidly thinning, was early restored, and has been kept by it in its wonted thickness and strength. It is the best Wash I have ever used.

A. W. RUSSELL, U. S. N.

To whom it may concern:

I have used "Dollard's Herbanium Extract" for the past ten or twelve years, and have found it a most excellent "Tonic" for the hair, having cleansing and invigorating properties of a very high order.

Respectfully,
LEWIS S. COX.

OAK HALL, S. E. Corner Sixth and Market Sts.

DEAR SIR:—If an inquiry was made to me as to where and from whom a good article of Hair Tonic could be obtained, I would, from long experience, recommend "Dollard's Herbanium Extract" as the very best article manufactured.

Yours truly, W. H. WANAMAKER.

It gives me great pleasure to give my testimony as to the value of "Dollard's Herbanium." I have used nothing else on my head for thirty years, and feel sure I owe to its use the perfectly healthy state of my scalp and hair.

Mrs. J. W. LODGE,
Merion Station, Montgomery Co, Pa.

Having used "Dollard's Herbanium" for a number of years, I cheerfully testify to its efficacy in removing dandruff and preventing the hair from falling out. It also renders the hair soft and lustrous.

MRS. M. L. HARDT,
No. 108 South Second Street, Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA, June 6, 1888.

Having used "Dollard's Herbanium Extract" for the past fifteen years, I cheerfully recommend it as a valuable preparation for the hair, thoroughly cleansing the scalp, and efficacious in case of nervous headache.

MRS. J. C. HILL,
No. 4118 Pine Street.

Prepared only and for sale, wholesale and retail, and applied professionally by

DOLLARD & CO.,
1223 CHESTNUT STREET.

GENTLEMEN'S HAIR CUTTING AND SHAVING. LADIES' AND CHILDREN'S HAIR CUTTING.

None but Practical Male and Female Artists Employed.

$230 A MONTH Agents Wanted. 20 best selling articles in the world. 1 sample Free. Address JAY BRONSON, Detroit, Mich.

TO PLAY MUSIC WITHOUT STUDY!

This Can Be Done by Means of the

INSTANTANEOUS GUIDE to the PIANO or ORGAN.

Anyone knowing a tune, either "in the head," as it is called," or able to hum, whistle or sing, can play it WITHOUT ANY PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC OR THE INSTRUMENTS. In fact it may be the first time they have ever seen a piano or organ, yet if they know so much as to whistle or hum a tune—say "Way Down on the Swanee River," for instance—they can play it IMMEDIATELY, correctly and with good effect, on the piano or organ, with the assistance of this GUIDE. THE GUIDE shows how the tunes are to be played with both hands and in different keys. Thus the player has the full effect of the bass and treble clefs, together with the power of making correct and harmonious chords in accompaniments. It must be plainly understood that the Guide will not make an accomplished musician without study. It will do nothing of the kind. What it can do, do well and WITHOUT FAIL is to enable anyone understanding the nature of a tune or air in music to play such tunes or airs, without ever having opened a music book, and without previously needing to know the difference between A or G, a half-note or a quarter-note, a sharp or a flat. The Guide is placed on the instrument, and the player, without reference to anything but what he is shown by it to do, can in a few moments play the piece accurately and without the least trouble. Although it does not and never can supplant regular books of study, it will be of incalculable assistance to the player by "ear" and all others who are their own instructors. By giving the student the power to play IMMEDIATELY twelve tunes of different character—this number of pieces being sent with each Guide—the ear grows accustomed to the sounds, and the fingers used to the position and touch of the keys. So, after a very little practice with the Guide, it will be easy to pick out, almost with the skill and rapidity of the trained player, any air or tune that may be heard or known.

The Guide, we repeat, will not learn how to read the common sheet music. But it will teach those who cannot spend years learning an instrument, how to learn a number of tunes without EITHER PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OR STUDY. A child if it can say its A, B, C's and knows a tune—say "The Sweet Bye and Bye"—can play it, after a few attempts, quite well. There are many who would like to be able to do this, for their own and the amusement of others, and to such we commend The Guide as BOUND TO DO for them ALL WE SAY. Its cheapness and usefulness, moreover, would make it a very good present to give a person, whether young or old, at Christmas. Almost every house in the land has a piano, organ or melodeon, whereon seldom more than one of the family can play. With this Guide in the house everybody can make more or less good use of their instruments.

The Guide will be sent to any address, all postage paid, on receipt of FIFTY CENTS. (Postage stamps, 2's, taken.) For Ten Cents extra a music book, containing the words and music for 100 popular songs, will be sent with The Guide. Address

THE GUIDE MUSIC CO.,
726 SANSOM ST., PHILADELPHIA.

Latest Fashion Phases.

Christmas bells! How soon your merry chimes will again be heard! And yet it seems but a few months since we waited hand-in-hand for those ringing peals which told of a dying year, and heralded the dawn of a New January.

Who does not feel at peace with all mankind when, on New Year's Eve, as the clock gives forth the last hour of the Old Year, we gather around the open windows to listen to the bells?

It is then our softened hearts turn to other years, when friends—now, alas! gone forever—were with us; and the young wife thinks tenderly of that New Year's Eve when some one was but an unspoken lover as yet.

Sad thoughts these must be; but chastened by the hour and bright surroundings, and everyone strives to be happy and gay, and bid dull care begone.

Since Cinderella dances have become so popular private parties are more often family gatherings, and very few give large parties, with elaborate set suppers, as of old. It has been suggested that this is due to motives of economy, but some delight in ostentation, and would still indulge in such festivities were they fashionable.

Evenings at home, where a few friends assemble for a quiet dance, and a tray of dainty cakes and sandwiches constitutes the supper, are most enjoyable for young people.

Children's fancy dress balls are now very general, and here the more simple costumes usually attract attention, provided that the toilette suits the wearer, and the design possesses originality.

"The Ideal Postman" wears a pleated skirt of bright red satin, arranged in kilts from the waist, and bordered with black velvet. On each pleat a small envelope, addressed and stamped, is placed cornerways, and merely tacked at each corner. Or with marking-ink or Indian-ink, squares of satin may be used in place of paper.

The belt and bodice trimming is composed of folded strips of white satin, with used stamps placed cornerways; these being easily fixed with the cement used for mending china and glass.

The bodice is of black velvet, the cap of red satin lined with buckram, and a black tablet in front. Black silk stockings and red shoes.

"A Frontier Girl" would wear red stocking and high boots; or, if preferred, high gaiters of drab or black cloth, and black shoes.

Princesses dress of hunter's green cloth, with pleated front of red surah, turn-down linen collar, and yellow silk scarf. Large gray or drab felt hat; leather gloves and a toy gun.

"Barbara Allen" wears one of the costumes made familiar by Kate Greenaway's charming drawings, and whose quaint designs furnish many ideas for fancy ideas for fancy dress.

This costume may be in white muslin and blue ribbons or pale green muslin with pink or in soft yellow with sash of moss-green.

The skirt is long and narrow, with gathered frills; the full bodice very short-waisted, and made on a tight lining. The bonnet, also of muslin, is stiffened with wire, and tied round with the same color as the sash.

The "Olympia" costume is of white cashmere, with gold braid and fringe, and a toy helmet of brass. The skirt and loose bodice are formed together and worn as an ordinary dress, and the long narrow scarf is folded round the right shoulder, as shown in sketches. Satin shoes with sandals may be worn.

"Society Gossip" is the title of a piquante costume in black and white, which may be worn by any age. The composition cap is of white satin or cardboard, with a quill pen on one side.

The bodice or polonaise is of white satin bordered with black velvet, with quaintly-shaped collar and cuffs. The pleated skirt of white satin nun's cloth, or serge has revers of black velvet; and a front panel, also of black velvet, with the heading of a newspaper as a border.

The titles or headings of the journals may be cut out and fixed to the skirt, but the more artistic plan is to use Indian ink and reproduce the titles on the white satin.

An opera-glass is carried, and also the large quill, which can be made from white crepe cotton on buck ram; this, mounted on a length of canvas, which is enamelled white, and shaped in similar fashion to a quill pen.

"Magpie" costumes are charming on very fair children, and the contrast of the glistening white satin with the black velvet is always very pretty and most effective.

The skirt is simple, the back in full gathers, with front and revers of white, the basque bodice cut away in front to imitate a souave bodice, with under bodice of white satin. The cap of black velvet is simply a circular piece put on a narrow stiffened band of white satin in Tam o'Shanter form, with a magpie at the side; and as this bird is not easily obtainable, I would advise one of the large common birds sold by the milliner, which will pass for a black bird of some kind when painted with Indian ink.

"Swiss" costumes admit of bright colorings, and may be varied as to materials and combinations as well as in name.

Thus "A Swiss Girl," "A Merry Mountain Maid," "A Tyrolean Belle," and many others will apply equally as well to the costume sketched, for the name goes a long way toward the effect, and the well known quotation, "What's in a name?" is hardly applicable to fancy dress.

"A Swiss Girl" wears a woolen petticoat of bright colorings, with rows of black or dark-hued velvet; bodice of embroidered material with velvet bands, or a velvet pointed bodice laced over a chemisette of muslin.

The cap is of velvet, with stiff pleated frills, which may be formed from the ordinary pleating sold ready for skirts. Embroidered woolen stockings and black shoes.

Boys's fancy costumes are more difficult to carry out, although the pretty boy with long hair is more easily dressed than the bigger boy of the nondescript age.

For tiny boys, "The Dainty Sweep," in white satin is novel and is easily carried out, or satin suits, with collar and cuffs of lace, are pretty for boys with flowing hair, and will bear variation in name and coloring.

"A Seventeenth Century Masher," "A Dandy in Pink," and various other titles may be applied to the same style of dress. The suit is cut like a long "Patience" suit, but the sleeve is slightly full, and the coat is furnished with buttons of gold filagree or cut steel.

"Buffalo Bill" may be attired in drab canvas, with braidings and trimmings, and a broad leather belt, with toy pistols; or the coat may be of brown flax cloth, with leather fittings, and the high leggings of pale drab cloth or canvas. Gauntlet gloves, a broad hat of felt or straw, and a rifle are indispensable.

Page's Dress of Sky-blue Silk.—Silver waistband, broad collar of lace covering neck and shoulders. Buskins, with lace fringe and silver tassels. Flat cap of blue silk, with silver and blue aigrette.

Fifteenth Century (Boy's Dress).—Short gown or crimson cloth of gold lined with brown velvet. Cap of brown velvet.

Russian Waiter.—White trousers and a kind of loose smockfrock, tied around the waist with a red or green cord. On festive days the white frocks are changed for a colored satin one.

Gentlemen of Queen Elizabeth's Court.—White velvet doublet slashed with silver, white velvet knickerbockers, and white silk stockings and white shoes, and girdle with gold buckle. Gold mounted sword, and a flat white velvet cap with a white plume.

Dutch Peasant Girl.—Red jackets with long lappets opening down the front. Blue skirt, bordered with black velvet short and round. White apron, stiff with embroidery; red stockings and buckled leather shoes; red cap, like a hussar's; gold earrings. This costume can be made with green cloth jacket and plain white woolen skirt, and white cap if preferred.

Odds and Ends.

DISHES FOR CHRISTMAS PARTIES.

If sandwiches are wanted, those made of chicken are a nice change from the beef or ham sandwiches.

Boil the chicken, remove all bones, etc., and chop the meat; season with salt and pepper, and celery, salt, or Indian pepper, if liked. Boil the broth down to a small quantity; mix with the meat. Press, so that it can be cut in slices, and put between the slices of bread; or the chicken may be chopped with celery and mixed with a salad dressing, and thus make chicken-salad sandwiches.

Nice little hot dishes are desirable, especially at small, informal gatherings, or at whist parties. A very nice and tasty one is,

Lobster Cutlets.—Mince the meat of a small lobster, add the yolks of two eggs (well beaten), salt and pepper to taste, two ounces of melted butter, and one-half teacupful of very fine bread crumbs. Stir until the ingredients are thoroughly mixed, shape in the form of cutlets, dip in crumbs, then in beaten egg, and again in crumbs, and fry brown in smoking-hot fat.

Another nice little *entree* or supper dish is made from sweetbreads, which may be those of lambs, oxen or calves, the latter being the very best, but also the most expensive.

Sweetbread Croquettes.—Boil four sweetbreads in water, to which a little salt has been added; drain and chopped fine, mashing them to a paste; season, with salt and pepper, add the beaten yolks of two eggs, two ounces of butter, a gill of cream, and enough breadcrumbs to make the mass of such consistency as will enable you to mold into little ball, pear or cork-shaped croquettes. Dip in beaten eggs, then crumbs, and fry in hot fat.

Very good indeed are

Calves' Feet Fricassees.—Boil the feet until tender, cut them in two and pull out the large bones. Have ready a pint of good gravy, add to it a teaspoonful of white wine, one of lemon peel and some salt. Stew the feet fifteen minutes in the gravy, and thicken with the yolks of two eggs, a gill of milk, one of butter, and two of flour. Shake the stew-pan over the fire, but do not let it boil again.

Here are a few sweet things that look pretty and taste delicious:

Cheese Cakes.—Four ounces of rolled biscuit, three ounces of butter, the yolks of two eggs, two ounces of sweet almonds, half an ounce of bitter almonds, beaten to paste, the grated rinds of two lemons, the juice of half a lemon, and three ounces of granulated sugar.

Apple Snow.—Prepare eight medium-sized cooking apples in every particular as for apple sauce. After the sauce is quite cold, break the whites of two eggs in a large basin, turn the sauce over the whites, and whip the whole with a silver fork thirty minutes. The whiteness of the snow depends on the care with which every blemish is removed when preparing the sauce.

Apple Meringue.—Prepare as for apple sauce, six or eight tart juicy apples. Season and sweeten to taste. Line plates with puff paste thinly rolled out, and bake, then cover the crust with the apple. Now whip the whites of three eggs with three tablespoonfuls of pulverized sugar till it stands alone; spread smoothly over the top, return to the oven long enough to brow nicely.

Carrot Pudding.—Use one quart of milk, half a cupful of grated carrot, half a cupful of sugar, half a teaspoonful of salt, one teaspoonful of vanilla extract, and three eggs. Beat together the eggs, sugar and salt; then add the carrot and vanilla, and beat again for two minutes. Now add the milk. Pour the mixture into a pudding-dish, and set the dish in a pan of hot water. Bake in an exceedingly slow oven for an hour and a-half. Serve cold.

The greatest novelty of all, and a change from ordinary ices,

Orange Hash.—This is made of oranges, bananas, lemons, apples, raisins, and pine-apples, that should be well cut into little bits, and mixed with sugar and nutmeg. The method of its serving is as peculiar as the dish itself. A hole is cut in an orange large enough to admit a spoon, and, after the inside has been scraped out, the orange is filled with the hash and a little champagne or other wine—just enough to fill in the chinks—and the whole is then frozen.

THERE was a curious sensation at a church wedding at Bridgeport, Conn., yesterday. The groom, a person of violent temper, swore because the bride and her party were behind time. During his ravings to his best man the bride arrived and overheard her fiance roundly abusing her and swearing outrageously. The bride's face assumed a deadly pallor. She approached the altar, and stood motionless until the minister asked if she "would love, cherish and obey," to which she replied in a clear, ringing voice: "Not by a long shot," and majestically marched out of the edifice.

OPINIONS STILL DIVIDED.—After a century of hot discussion we are not certain whether coffee is a wholesome stimulant or a deadly poison; whether we should have hot or cold, or no baths at all; whether we should keep our feet dry, or pay no attention to wet feet and soaked clothing; whether tobacco is a blessing or a curse; whether we over eat or under eat; whether we should eat at night or go to bed hungry; whether we should exercise more or exercise less; whether we should drink much water or little.

A GRAVE, wherever found, preaches a short, pithy sermon to the soul.

Confidential Correspondents.

L. M. E.—We should consider the gentleman prefers not to keep up the correspondence, and should let it drop.

A. T. R.—A preparation can be bought at any theatrical costumier's for blacking the face which will in no way injure or stain the skin.

J. E. R.—The heaviest gun that has ever been manufactured has been recently cast at the works of Herr Krupp at Essen. Its weight is 150 tons.

ESTHER.—The letters "S.P.Q.R." inscribed on the standards of the Roman legions, are initials of the words "Senatus populusque Romanus"—"the senate and the people of Rome."

G. DENNIS.—For the warts which are such a source of annoyance, you will find the application of acetic acid as good as anything. This should be applied daily until they become soft and tend to break up. Be careful not to get the acid on to the healthy skin.

CLARA JANE.—Persons who are subject to cold feet and hands should wash them night and morning in cold water, then rub them well with a moderately rough towel, till they become dry and warm. If going to bed at the time, put on a pair of woolen socks and warm gloves.

RINTER.—Weakness of sight generally begins to show itself by defective vision at dusk, and when the lamps are first lighted. You probably have overstrained your eyes, and should rest them as much as you can. You should go to an optician, and get him to fit you with glasses of a proper focus.

IN LOVE.—We should recommend patience to you. It is never well to rush into acquaintance with any one without knowing something of them. Wait your opportunity, and you may be able to render the young lady in question some little service that may open up an acquaintanceship, or you may meet some one who can tell you who she is, and so introduce you.

JAMES.—The situation in the essay is to An Abroad Cooper, or a Cooper Abroad, a person who calls at public-houses to sample the beer and ale in order to ascertain if the quality is satisfactory; to value the stock of beer and ale in the cellar when there is a change of landlords; to take the stock of casks periodically; to examine empty casks, etc.

HANSON.—The three symbols, or signs, which have been in universal use throughout all ages are the cross, the aureole, or circle—known as the halo—and the triangle. All these signs were in use before the Christian era. The cross is frequently found on the Egyptian mummies. It was held as a sacred sign among the pagans, and is still so in many lands where the cross of Calvary is unknown. The aureole, or disc, encircling the heads of saints, signifies perfection; but among the early religionists it was the emblem of monotheism. The triangle was used to typify fire when placed with its apex upwards; but when with the apex downwards, it was the emblem of water. The conjunction of these signs is frequently to be found on the most ancient monuments of the world. Thus, when conquerors had conceived the idea of ruling by Divine right, each adopted the aureole, to denote the solar sphere, and the cross emblematic of dominion. These signs are perpetuated in the crown worn by kings.

YOUNGEST.—The Holy Grail, or Greal, is a miraculous chalice made of a single precious stone, supposed to have been an emerald, possessing the power of prolonging life, and many other very wonderful properties. It was believed by some to have been brought by angels from heaven, and was the vessels used by our Lord at the Last Supper. It is also said that it was preserved by Joseph of Arimathea, and in it he caught the blood which flowed from our Saviour's wounds as He was taken from the cross. It is surrounded by many legends, and one is that if it is approached by any but a perfectly pure and holy person it is borne away and vanishes from their sight. It was in quest of this that most of the adventures that befel the Knights of the Round Table were met with; these form the subject of Tennyson's poems, "The Idylls of the King." In the Cathedral at Genoa a cup is still preserved, which was taken by the Crusaders in 1101, and for a long time was considered to have been the Holy Grail.

CATO.—The best advice we can give you is comprised in the one great word—persevere. Knowledge will obey the call made upon her, whether by rich or poor. The humblest ranks have their heroes as well as the titled and noble. Columbus, the discoverer of America, was originally a weaver; Niebuhr, the historian, was originally a peasant; Rollin, well-known for his "Ancient History," was a cutler's son; Bloomfield, the poet, was a poor shoemaker; Franklin landed in Philadelphia in search of work with only a few cents in his pocket. The poets, Kirk White and Akenside, were the sons of butchers; Arkwright, the inventor of the spinning-jenny, which created the cotton trade of England, was a penny barber, and so poor that he could not exhibit his model until his friends had bought him a coat. These examples, and hundreds of others that we could cite, show what perseverance and self-improvement can accomplish.

HYGEIA.—"What are we good for?" is doubtless a most important question, but it is at the same time one that should elevate instead of depress us. We are all good for something; there is not one single speck or atom of creation that is not good for something, that does not not appeal in some way to the heart of man, or in some other way affect another atom of the same creation. We are not all equally useful; we have not all equal power to be so; but each in his own sphere, however limited that may be, has his work ready to his hand. Suppressing temper, showing cheerfulness, administering a kind word to one who wants it, a smile, or the smallest act of kindness, constitutes the whole sphere of some; and a very important one it is, It is even doubtful whether it is not nobler and better to do in silence and solitude what can at best cause us to receive the praise of the few, than to subdue kingdoms, to conquer thrones, dominations, virtues, princedoms, powers, as Milton has it; and finally, on a dying bed, after a stormy and troublous life, have little to look back upon but seas of bloodshed, and the great result, however generously anticipated and gloriously striven for, in its infancy but yet, with the great consummation looming dimly in the vague, uncertain future. As for the expression that parents so often unwisely make use of, "You good-for-nothing girl, I don't know what will become of you!" it means simply an outburst of anger at some fault committed, which will possibly be forgotten in five minutes.